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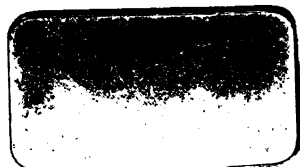
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THE VICISSITUDES

OF

COMMERCE

A TALE OF THE COTTON TRADE.

" The cotton plant, whom satire cannot blast,
Shall bloom the favourite of these realms, and last;
Like yours, ye fair, her fame from censure grows,
Prevails in charms, and glares above her foes."

DR. DELANT, A.D. 1731.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

LONDON

SAUNDERS AND OTLEY, CONDUIT STREET.

1852.

249. x. 341.

LONDON:
SAVILL AND EDWARDS, PRINTERS,
CHANDOS-STREET.

THE
VICISSITUDES OF COMMERCE.

CHAPTER I.

“He that puts all upon adventures, doth oftentimes
break, and come to poverty.”

BACON.

AT the commencement of the new year, a slight improvement took place in the branch of trade with which Messrs. Robbison and Steele were principally connected. This had been seized upon at once by them as a pretext for working Mr. Marsh's mill thirteen hours per day; but as it was a mere speculative movement, and, therefore, without a true basis, the demand soon

ceased, and the hopes of returning prosperity proved delusive. The shock of the previous September had been too severe and too widely felt for so speedy a revival of such times as the years forty-four and five. The excitement died away, leaving the minds of the manufacturing community more depressed than before; for it convinced all—even the most sanguine—that years must lapse before a steady trade could be again established.

Mr. Steele's mind was strongly imbued with this opinion, and he began to feel rather alarmed about Mr. Marsh's affairs. The trade articles in the newspapers afforded him little consolation: for though he trusted more to his own practical knowledge of the market rather than to these accounts, still there were many with whom they had great influence; and, as there was not one word of encouragement in them, so they naturally caused a deeper

gloom to overspread men's minds. Not a ray of hope could be gleaned from them. Each succeeding week closed with a further depression of every sort of goods, and almost all descriptions of manufactures were long offered below the price at which they could be produced without tempting buyers.

"If," said Mr. Steele, addressing his partner one morning towards the close of February, "we do not mean to *lose* money by Marsh, we must pull him up."

"Yes," rejoined Mr. Robbison, "I think our most prudent course would be to stop him, and so make an end of the business, and the sooner the better."

"But his account has run bad something like two thousand pounds; we must have that back though. He shall stop for cotton once or twice; I'll then tell him to buy his own in future; he will have a little credit with some of these

Manchester cotton dealers; and then, when he has sent in yarn enough to cover us, we'll put the screw on immediately, d—n me if we wont; and not one shilling more must he finger."

Having kept him very barely supplied with the raw material, the stock of this was soon worked up. His consternation may well be conceived to be great when his agents informed him that in future he must rely upon his own resources. His first impulse was to close the mill; but this would have brought on the crisis at once; the dreaded hour, however, must be warded off a short time longer if possible. Credit was sought and obtained from Katch and Co.

These gentlemen were not aware how irrecoverably Mr. Marsh was involved, but hoped, by keeping him partially supplied with cotton for a few months, to acquire, by the way in which their busi-

ness was transacted, a sufficient margin to cover the eventual loss. But this came sooner than they had calculated upon. The hours of work had been reduced from thirteen each day to six; and, in addition to this, the machinery was frequently at a stand for want of the raw material.

Nothing could exceed the astonishment of the workpeople when the latter event took place. It forewarned them, as plainly as language could have done, of what they had to expect. A report had been whispered amongst them that all was not right; but, judging from outward appearances, they concluded that as the mill was running such long hours, their master must be making money. It was not the stoppage, but the cause of it, that opened their eyes to the real state of his affairs. The sympathy expressed was not great, his recent infringement of the Ten Hours Bill having made him one of the most

unpopular masters in the town, and all his misfortunes were, of course, imputed to that. The state of his workpeople was a truly deplorable one; for, in addition to the exorbitant rents and heavy rates, there was the high price of provisions, consequent upon the potatoe famine and other concurrent circumstances. Jack Houghton's earnings were barely sufficient to keep starvation from the door, the family subsisting principally on oatmeal porridge, for no assistance could be obtained from the parochial authorities. There were now no afternoon merry meetings, for if the husbands had not been at home a great portion of the day, their wives would still have been prevented from assembling through the want of money, though many of them yet found sufficient wherewith to visit the singing-room.

Mr. Marsh was soon fully convinced of the utter recklessness, and even danger,

of attempting any longer to carry on business, and therefore came to the resolution to stop his works. Now was the time for Messrs. Robbison and Steele to step in, and, like a couple of lions driving the vultures from the carcase of a dead ass, seize upon everything that had, until then, been called Mr. Marsh's; in this instance the lion's share comprised the whole. The creditors found all "tabooed." The mill and machinery they knew to be mortgaged; they now discovered, to their no small surprise, that not only the mansion and grounds, but even the very furniture was the property of Messrs. Robbison and Steele. These two gentlemen began to talk very despondingly about the immense losses they had sustained upon stocks of yarn, which, by the by, they had never held; and of the depreciation of mill property, though, at the same time, they refused a very advan-

tageous offer for the whole concern as it then stood, waiting until the creditors had proved their debts, expecting to have a more favourable one from them, but in this they were disappointed. There was not anything bearing the name of assets to which the hungry creditors could advance a claim, except the three thousand pounds settled upon Mr. Marsh's daughters. The unfortunate gentleman was accordingly made a bankrupt, but he intimated his intention to oppose the appropriation by his creditors of the money so disposed of, under the plea of solvency at the time of the transaction.

Messrs. Robbison and Steele, anxious to allay, by any means, the clamours raised against them, asserted themselves to have been creditors for a large amount at that period, and so at once upset the plea.

But whilst in the ardour of prosecution, all, except the lawyers, were ignorant, or

forgot, that their suit would be a very expensive one; and, at the termination, they found themselves in a plight similar to that of a child, who, after being allured into a fen in pursuit of some gaudy moth, which in his eagerness to capture he has dashed to pieces, and then gets well whipped for spoiling his clothes; for, instead of a dividend, all who had proved their debts were called upon for a disbursement.

The landed estate and mansion were soon bought on very advantageous terms by Messrs. Robbison and Steele, who afterwards sold them, netting a much larger sum than the amount of their mortgage. This they considered would compensate the loss they were likely to incur by the sale of the mill property; for most of Mr. Marsh's machinery was old, and the manner in which it was constructed rendered it unfit for successful competition

with that of a more modern description. Many attempts to dispose of it by private treaty having failed, it was brought to the hammer and sold for little more than the value of the metals of which it was fabricated.

After the sale at the mill, a scene commenced such as would seem to an unpractical person to be a mere wanton destruction of property, — one of the conditions of purchase being, that four days only would be allowed for removing the machinery, and anything remaining afterwards would be detained until a quarter's rent for the room had been paid. Consequently the noise and confusion, attendant upon the pulling down and breaking up the machines, were almost indescribable; and certainly a more melancholy or disheartening sight it would be difficult to conceive. Those who witnessed it were moved to pity at the

forlorn condition of the persons who were formerly employed in working the machines, rather than in commiseration for him whose property they had once been.

The feelings of the factory operative are seldom much affected by scenes, even of the saddest nature; his perception becomes blunted by constant change of place and friends; and too often by a life-long familiarity with misery or vice. But this reckless proceeding caused the countenances of many who had worked for Mr. Marsh to display a grief which, perhaps, even the death of one however dear to them, might not have called forth. One of the persons most affected was an elderly woman of the name of Hayes. She was a descendant of the man of that name who had been so largely instrumental in bringing about the evil destiny of the town of Blackburn, and placed it in a position of inferiority, which it still

retains, when compared with many of its manufacturing rivals: It appeared to be a judgment upon this man that his posterity, to the third generation, should spend their lives in ceaseless toil, working the very same description of machines—the jenny-frames—that he had so maliciously endeavoured to destroy.

This woman, though barely fifty years of age, would have been taken, judging by her appearance, for one at least ten years older; and in stature was tall and remarkably spare, with hard and haggard features. She was assisting to take in pieces a jenny-frame, upon which the labour of the previous thirty years of her life had been spent,—working seldom less than sixty-nine, and often eighty hours per week. This long acquaintance had attached the poor creature to her frame; so much so, indeed, that when the hour of separation arrived the parting was a

sad one. The tears trickled down her hollow cheeks, as one part after another of her iron companion was thrown into the street; thus evincing the possibility of human nature regarding with feelings of veneration almost—certainly with an extraordinary degree of attachment—the very object that causes daily toil and pain.

Mr. Steele felt little or no compunction for the distress he had brought upon hundreds of his fellow mortals; and more especially so upon the family of his victim. Far happier had they been if born to earn their daily bread by the labour of their own hands, rather than to have wasted their spring of life in a state of existence, in which the luxury of idleness and the toil of pleasure, were all that memory had to offer; and now, like the steward in the parable, “dig they could not,—to beg they were ashamed.”

So callous was Mr. Steele to human misery, that when reminded of the utter destitution of Mrs. Marsh and her daughters, he replied: "Let them work; it's what they've never done yet, and quite time for 'em to begin. They'll not starve while there's anybody to pay poor's-rates."

During the last few months the mind of Mrs. Marsh had been preparing itself for a catastrophe; but the crisis had arrived more speedily, and was attended with more direful consequences, than her most gloomy forebodings had anticipated. Even the mere foreknowledge of the certainty that sooner or later ruin will inevitably overtake us, has the effect of diminishing the shock when the event does take place; and in this she possessed an advantage denied to her daughters. A fondness, as foolish as it was dangerous, had induced her to con-

ceal from them the unpleasant tidings so long as it was possible.

The young girls, unconscious of the dark and lowering future, were as gay and stately as if their May, with all its imaginary enjoyments, all its youthful visions of ideal—because indefinable pleasure—was to last till the October of life. But there was neither summer nor autumn in store for them,—only one life-long dreary winter, cheered by no habits of patience or industry which, like an aurora borealis, might have caused them to forget the setting of the sun of fashion, by lighting the cheerful fire of family contentment.

The fortitude requisite to bear up against unexpected poverty, and the resignation displayed by many, were, however, both wanting. But the fault could not be laid to their charge; they had been educated as the daughters of wealth

too frequently are, and taught to consider that a woman, however amiable or virtuous, unless she was also rich and accomplished, ought to be regarded as an inferior class of being; as such the poor had always been treated by them; and to be reduced to their level was a disgrace which they had never for a single instant supposed could be their own lot. This thought was too terrible, too heart-rending, to be contemplated in its full truth.

For poor Ann the stroke came with double power. She had for some time been looked upon as the future bride of Captain Simpleton. This gentleman was, at the period of which we are writing, an almost constant guest at her father's mansion. His brother officers differed in opinion as to whether the good cheer Mrs. Marsh always provided, or the brilliant beauty of her daughter, constituted

the stronger attraction to their comrade. The world was pleased to assign the latter as the cause; and in this Mrs. Marsh, in the blindness of her vanity, coincided. But now neither she, nor the world, were much surprised when the 'Gazette' informed them that Captain Simpleton had exchanged into a regiment just ordered on foreign service. To the girls the news was ominous. It was the first direct slight they had received, and therefore regarded as the harbinger of many more.

It is a fact, though one not easily accounted for, that the red coat of a soldier possesses greater attractions for the fair sex than the black one of a civilian. A momentary passion, rather than love, gives the bias to this predilection; and many discover, when too late, that the life an officer's lady is compelled to lead, is not so full of sweets as it appeared.

The grief of Ann was the vexation of thwarted ambition, and not the deep pure affliction of blighted love. Pride, even in poverty, seldom leaves beauty when that has once become aware of its power. For having been assumed in prosperity to make grace and wealth more commanding; so now in adversity it must be retained to hide the anguish with which the heart is ready to burst. For though Ann Marsh was fully aware that any assumption of haughtiness on her part was worse than folly, still, self adulation is a vice so sweet, that stronger minds than hers have not been able to subdue it. Nor was she; though the conviction now, for the first time, crossed her mind that it might have been her arrogant bearing that nipped in the bud the attachment she imagined Frank Morland had once evinced for her.

Mr. Morland was the only person whose

friendship stood the test of poverty. Mr. Marsh's misfortunes appearing to draw tighter the hitherto loose bonds of acquaintanceship. The sympathy he felt did not evaporate in mere empty words, but its sincerity and depth was proved by acts of the most considerate kindness. To alleviate, even a little, without ostentation, the calamities of a fellow mortal, is more truly honourable than to shower upon him thousands of gold, if proclaimed to the world by the trumpet of fame. His assistance was bestowed in such a way that the recipients of his bounty, in the present case, were scarcely aware they were under any obligations to their benefactor, who thus showed by his conduct that he was possessed of refinement of soul as well as of benevolence of disposition.

The total stoppage of Mr. Marsh's mill placed Jack Houghton and his family in

a position as dark and cheerless as it seems possible for man to contemplate and retain hope. The only gleam of satisfaction that cast a consolatory reflection into Jack's mind, when adducing from the misery of the present, the wretched life himself and such of his family as remained with him must for a time lead, was, that his two oldest daughters were not only comfortable, but might, perhaps, afford their parents some assistance. This is a hope seldom disappointed. For in times of great privation, such as the present, the sympathy with each other exhibited by the factory workers, and their hearty willingness to assist their more unfortunate companions or relations, sharing with them the small and precarious pittance of which the unforeseen accident of a day may deprive them, is a trait in their character which

redounds to their credit, and cannot be too highly commended.

This innate spirit of compassion had frequently brought either Alice or Dinah to their father's cottage. A few shillings slipped into his hand before departing, were given in silence and received with a melancholy smile. The elder of the sisters could ill spare the money, small as the sums were: for though the mill at which her husband was employed continued at full work, still he lost much time through ill health. And then there was the old woman to pay for nursing the infant whilst its mother was at the mill. Thus poor Alice had difficulties to contend with sufficient to have deterred many from taking the children's crumbs, even to bestow them on a parent. But with Dinah, who had none of these difficulties to encounter until the period of

Mr. Marsh's bankruptcy, the case was different; a little less spent in dress, or some frivolous amusement, was all the privation that ensued to her. For in addition to her wages she had received numerous presents from her lover, or rather her seducer, young Marsh; but now he having no longer any money to squander upon his pleasures and debaucheries, abandoned her at the very time when assistance and consolation were most needful. Her little stock of ready money had been barely sufficient to maintain her whilst unable to work; and now her infant was dependent upon its mother's labour alone for its support.

Few young women when placed in a situation similar to that in which Dinah now was, have the moral courage requisite to abstain from sinking still deeper into the mire of sin, after having so long followed the dictates of pleasure. But

the counsel and warnings of her former pastor, long forgotten, now crowded on her memory; and though the words of the good man had not been attended with an immediate effect, and though to all appearance the flower was nipped before the fruit could knit, it was not so; a germ had been left which shot forth when watered by the warm tears of affliction, restraining her from further shame and carrying her through the yet more bitter trials that awaited her. For it was not many weeks after she became a mother that notice was given of a stoppage of one half of the mill at which she worked; this happened to be the portion in which Dinah was employed; the American trade, for which that description of cloth was intended, being in a state of complete stagnation. Bonnets, dresses, and, in fact, everything she possessed, were pledged, in the vain hope that other employment

could be obtained. When this means of subsistence failed, however, the delusion gave way to despair. She had yet one resource; the thought was terrible. For a moment she wavered; such a moment, pregnant with the fate of an immortal soul. But virtue triumphed over hunger and wretchedness; and snatching up her infant, the remembrancer of her folly, she fled to the parents whose roof ~~had been~~ forsaken for that of a stranger. She well knew that misery and poverty awaited her there, still a natural impulse pointed it out as the only place of refuge.

Upon entering the street, or lane, in which her parents had resided, she found it deserted; all the houses being empty except one, at which she inquired the cause, and learnt that Messrs. Robbison and Steele having repudiated Mr. Marsh's agreement with the owner of the cottages, that person, vexed at the loss of a year's

rent, distrained everything that was on the premises. Thus the tenants after paying double rent, some of them for many years, now lost all they had.

The remnant of Jack's furniture was swept away together with that belonging to the other tenants; and he and his family turned into the street. They had taken up their abode in a cellar, which was pointed out to Dinah. The descent into this subterranean vault, for to it any other name would be misapplied, was by a flight of steps, built of bricks, not very regular in height, and covered with a damp green moss. The cellar, or vault, was divided into two parts; the one towards the front street being partially lighted by a small window thickly coated with mud, which was constantly splashed by the passers, from the rough pavement of the footpath, the top of the window-frame being level with the feet of

the pedestrian; the other, or back room, might have been termed the Black Hole, for it had no window, nor yet any means of ventilation. A little straw, a pan, a few broken pots, and some stones to sit upon, constituted the furniture of the place. And for this miserable, wretched abode, one shilling per week was to be paid.

How the family had subsisted, was a mystery which would have puzzled even themselves to explain. A few tickets for the soup kitchens, and a small allowance from the town, was all they had to starve upon. They might still have borne up long against all this, if Dinah and her infant had not been added to the family circle; but now that was impossible. The climax of their misfortunes had arrived; but, from the very extent of their misery, sprung the energy to combat

it. For if some strenuous exertion was not made, they must remove to the work-house. The latter alternative was not to be thought of, until all other means of sustaining life had failed.

There were two schemes broached at the family meeting, when they were all assembled together. The first was, that Jack should perambulate the streets with an ass and cart, vending coals. But this plan was dismissed without much discussion, being found impracticable. The other suggestion, of exchanging salt for rags, appeared to afford a better chance of success, as the total outfit requisite would consist of a wheelbarrow (an old one might do, and could be bought for very little), a bag of salt, and a pair of scales. This was accordingly fixed upon, and everything satisfactorily arranged before they remembered, that if all the

property they possessed were pledged, it would not obtain even the small sum required.

In the midst of this dilemma, which caused the abandonment of this scheme also, Dinah placed her child in its grandmother's lap, and, throwing a shawl over her head, left the cellar. She hurried through the streets, and took the road leading towards Mr. Morland's mills. A thought had flashed across her mind. "If Mr. Wynn only knowed, he'd do summut for us." Her heart almost misgave her when admitted into the presence of the reverend gentleman. She felt rather as a culprit than a pleader, seeking the aid of a good man, before whom she was about to lay open her troubles. Not more than two years had elapsed since she left the village; but these years had been fraught with the anxieties attendant

upon pleasure as well as misery; and so much was she altered, that few could have discovered in the pale, hunger-stricken woman, the joyous buxom girl of former days. But Mr. Wynn was too conversant with all who were, or had been, under his charge, not to recognise her at once.

"Well, Dinah," said he, addressing her, "I thought to have seen you before now. What is the melancholy tale your hollow cheeks relate?"

Now Dinah was no heroine, for she cried like a child whilst relating her story, which she did without exaggeration, telling the truth, but, unfortunately, not the whole truth. Mr. Wynn's income was not large; but, in cases like the present one, his fatherly counsel was of little value, unless attended with something more applicable to their immediate wants. Often had he stinted himself rather than

refuse relief to such as these. He promised to call at her father's cellar that very day, and gave her a little money to get the family something to eat in the mean time.

When the reverend gentleman paid the promised visit, he found Dinah's story but too true. The cellar was not fit for a pigstye; for even these animals require both light and air to keep them healthy, but it was thought suitable for six human beings to exist in. Jack was out, endeavouring to earn a few pence by some chance labour. Mr. Wynn placed the small sum required for carrying out their plan in Dinah's hand. But the news he had to impart was of more value than his gift; he had obtained from Mr. Morland's manager the promise of a pair of looms for her after the next pay. This was indeed news, as welcome as it was unex-

pected, and elicited the rude but sincere thanks of the young woman, who, together with her mother, ceased not to call down blessings on his head. He concluded his mission of love by telling Dinah that his wife had a dress or two for her.

Jack's heart beat quick with hope as he sallied forth on the following morning to commence his new trade. He passed through most of the principal streets of the town without meeting any competitors; but, at the same time, without doing much business. Disheartened with the little success attendant upon his day's toil, he returned to his cheerless abode, resolving to try the back streets the following day. He did so, but had only proceeded half way up one of them, before he heard behind him a cry of like import to that of his own: "Sawt, sawt; weight

for weight;" whilst a similar sound, re-echoing from a cross street at the further end, broke upon his ear.

Three gaunt and hungry lions, met together over the carcase of a hare, scarcely a mouthful for one, could not have regarded each other with a more sullen or scowling look. Poor men! it was not the value of the prize that caused selfishness to be so visibly marked on their countenances. They all wore a similar dress,—black fustian coats, with trousers and waistcoats of a like material; but which, when new, were almost white, now, old and stained with oil, the colour was a dirty brown; whilst on the outside of each trouser, a little below the knee, a mark of deeper colour might be observed,—this distinguished them as having once been spinners. In their palmier days, no doubt, they had associated together as friends;

but this was now forgotten. Poverty is the mother of selfishness. And if the rivalry of the rich and learned begets hatred, how can we blame severely the ignorant and the poor for being imbued with the same feeling towards the competitor who is driven almost to seize the crust out of his hand?

CHAPTER II.

"Yet haply there will come a weary day,
When, over-task'd at length,
Both Love and Hope beneath the load give way.
Then, with a statue's smile—a statue's strength,
Stands the mute sister, Patience, nothing loth,
And both supporting, does the work of both."

COLERIDGE.

THE India mail of the 17th of February, brought the usual number of letters for Mr. Morland; but not one addressed to the Parsonage. This was the first time Frank had permitted a post to leave without adding to the contents of its bags a letter for his reverend friend. Mr. Morland felt sorry for this, as he thought the omission might be a source of grief to the old gentleman, to whom the receipt of a letter from India was as great a pleasure

as it was to himself. In a hurried postscript, Frank had desired to be remembered to his friend, and also to his dearest Mar—. The latter paragraph had been crossed through with the pen, but was still legible. Now this amused Mr. Morland not a little, following, as it did, immediately after a highly drawn eulogy upon the wit and beauty of a young lady named Maranda Grey, who, with her father, an officer in the East India Company's service, were to be Frank's travelling associates. For having satisfactorily concluded his business affairs, he was on the point, when his letter was written, of leaving Calcutta for the interior of the country. After describing the arrangements, he concluded thus: "Our party is under the guidance of Major Grey, who has been many years in the country, and is now on his way to the Punjaub, and so we shall have his company as far as Delhi.

He is a true soldier, and a thorough gentleman. And though the last named, still by no means the least attractive of the party is his daughter Maranda. This young lady came out from England to join her father here. She is a lovely creature, witty, lively without being rude, and so general a favourite, that we have created her queen of our merry company; every one obtaining a request has, therefore, the privilege of kissing hands. I am afraid this regal practice will cause the petitions of her subjects to be more numerous than important."

Mr. Morland perceived, from the tenor of his son's letters, that he was in the enjoyment of health and good spirits. Anxious to communicate the happy tidings to Mr. Wynn, he took the note containing the above extract, and was proceeding through the park when he met that gentleman.

"I have some pleasant news for you, sir; news that will take you a little by surprise," was Mr. Morland's first salutation.

"Frank is on his way home, then; for that, I imagine, would be the most agreeable of all communications; would it not?"

"Yes; but that is not it. I think he is half in love. I hope the young lady may be as amiable as he represents her. But read, and judge if I be not correct in my conclusions."

Mr. Wynn had for some time been living in that happy thankful state of mind enjoyed here by the good alone. It was his greatest pleasure to see all committed to his spiritual care contented, and to be looking forward to the future with delight. But if what he had just heard was true, then there was one to whom the tidings would be the grave of

all earthly happiness, the death-blow of hopes, which it would then appear had been but too fondly cherished; and to her his thoughts recurred.

Mr. Morland was surprised at the thoughtful manner in which his friend received the intelligence. And still more so when, after perusing the letter, he said, "I am reluctantly driven to adopt the same opinion of the state of your son's affections as that taken by yourself."

"Why reluctantly, Mr. Wynn? Having hitherto expressed a desire to see him comfortably fixed in life."

"The fondest wish of my heart, my dear sir," replied he, "was to witness the union of your son with a woman worthy of him; with one who would look up to him, not merely as her husband, but as her guide and her guardian; one whose modesty and domestic virtues would have brought happiness, not only to Frank,

but have caused a father's, yea, and a friend's heart, to overflow with joy. Such was the noble being I had pictured to my mind, as she who should have been your daughter. But do you think it probable, nay more, do you conceive it possible, sir, that this hope can now be realized? That such a spirited young lady as this officer's daughter, who has travelled, apparently unattended, over almost half the circumference of the globe, and is now receiving the homage of every gentleman in whose company she is placed; is fêted, and almost worshipped; can you imagine, I say, that this queen of hearts will forget her power, and the pride of her conquests; and, laying aside her love of adulation, shrink at once into the wife of a village manufacturer? It is contrary to the laws of human passions; and I am sorry, for Frank's sake, that it is so; but when once the female mind

becomes imbued with the pleasures of such a life of gaiety, so great is the fascination of it, that even the chilling influence of old age is often unable to subdue it."

"The force of your reasoning, sir, there is no withstanding. But if my son has really become attached to the young lady, I shall not allow any selfish feelings to stand between him and what he conceives to be the source of his future happiness. And if I were inclined so to do, it would very likely be too late now to bring him into our way of thinking. For young people, you know, sir, do not look upon these matters in the same light as that in which their seniors are apt to view them. But we must have Mrs. Wynn's opinion; ladies often discover more in communications of this sort than we gentlemen."

This was just the proposition the rever-

end gentleman wished his friend to make. He was glad to have the letter in his possession a short time, for the news must be broken to Maria, and he knew of no better plan of doing this than by letting Frank's words impart to her the evident change that was coming over his affections. His visit was postponed until the Saturday evening following. When he called, Maria, as he expected, was alone, the old couple being gone to town. She was seated at her sewing in the same room where she had received the plighted troth of her lover, and which was now about to be the scene of the first bitter moments she had experienced since that happy event. "She has been too confiding," thought Mr. Wynn, "but the destruction of this delusive dream may, by weaning her entirely from earth, bring her the nearer to heaven. God grant it may."

He conversed a long time on various subjects before he could summon resolution to broach the topic which was the intent of his visit to disclose, well knowing that to a mind like hers, in which a suspicion that Frank could act dishonourably had never for a single instant obtained a lodgment, the communication must either be disbelieved altogether, or received in its most direful meaning. "Frank," said he, at last, "is well, and appears from his letters to be enjoying himself."

"Thank God for it. Oh, sir! I do feel so happy after each mail has arrived, for we then know that a few weeks more have been passed in safety, and so making our reunion the more sure."

"He has been so much engaged preparing for his journey into the country," continued Mr. Wynn, "and the attractions of the—of the—society in which he

is now placed, that he has not found time to write to any of us except Mr. Morland."

Maria had noticed a slight singularity in the old gentleman's manner, and the embarrassed way in which he now spoke of Frank suddenly aroused her worst fears. "Is he—oh tell me, sir!—is he indeed well and happy?"

"He is. But read this," said he, placing Frank's letter in her trembling hand. She took it to the window, the approach of night having cast a gloom through the little apartment, and opened the lattice to allow the cool breeze to play upon her flushed cheeks. Mr. Wynn gazed on her lovely countenance, watching intently its every change, and almost afraid he had been too abrupt. For though he had well studied Maria's character, still the noble display of it he now witnessed surprised him. As she read her lover's de-

scription of the charming Maranda Grey, instead of hysterics or fainting fits, all he observed was, that a tear had been gradually forming, and would have escaped from its brilliant fountain had not her long eyelashes detained the wishful wanderer. But as she perused the letter's postscript, the moisture vanished from her eyes like dewdrops before an easterly wind; whilst the blood rushed to her heart, as if to sustain the little flutterer in a trial, the bitterness of which few can conceive, for happily, few experience such moments.

The thought that flashed across her mind was banished from it as quickly as it arose. And as the letter dropped from her hand she exclaimed, amid a flood of tears—"Never until he brings her home as his bride shall I believe him to be false. Only say, Mr. Wynn, you think him true, and I shall be happy again.

You don't speak. Oh sir! do not think he has forgotten me."

Maria received from her reverend friend that consolation which his age and profession enabled him to bestow; and by calm and devout language so soothed her mind, that neither Hargreaves nor his dame had the slightest idea of the storm that had so recently raged there. Her placid countenance gave as little indication of the late struggle, as the sand-bank sparkling in the morning sun tells of the noble ship that only a few hours before had been dashed to pieces on its now smooth unruffled surface; so little was her manner changed. Still she looked forward to the future with many an anxious, but not despairing thought. And so strong was her reliance on Frank's honour, that she felt grieved whenever Mr. Wynn expressed any doubt upon the subject. Time, though it glide onward

ever with a uniform speed, often appears to man to assume at one period the heavy wing of the sea-bird, whilst at another its flight leaves the swallow far behind; so much does joy or sorrow affect him. But, be it one or the other, the dreaded or wished for moment arrives with unerring precision.

The India mail became due, and two days afterwards its arrival was announced in the public papers. Each post was now expected to bring the welcome news. The business letters came with their accustomed punctuality, but none from Frank. This Mr. Morland easily accounted for to his friend, by supposing the letters might have been detained in the interior, until too late for the present mail, his agent having informed him that his son had left Calcutta. When this explanation was transmitted to Maria, it afforded little consolation to her. The unhealthy-

ness of the climate brought fears into her mind she could not repress; and when another, and still another mail came without letters from Frank, or any reason being assigned by the agent in India for this silence, her doubts were changed, almost to certainty. Nor was she the only one who indulged in these melancholy reflections; Mr. Morland became seriously alarmed for his son's safety. For though he had had many conversations with his friend on the subject, yet neither of them regarded the two first omissions as being of much importance. Young people when travelling, and surrounded with novel objects, opening up innumerable sources of enjoyment, seldom devote much time to correspondence. But Frank had never before disregarded his father's wish: there must be a cause for his doing so now. Urged on by such thoughts as these, Mr. Morland instructed

his agent to make every inquiry possible for tracing his son's movements. A long time would elapse before these commands could be acted upon, and a much longer period before he could be made acquainted with the results.

Suspense is the most terrible sensation that can find a lodgment in the human heart, often causing a misery more lasting than the loss of friends or fortune. And this foe, from which there is no escape, now began to prey upon Mr. Morland's mind; for though he constrained himself to believe, that no harm had befallen his son, still there was an inward voice demanding a proof of this; and until such was granted there could be no happiness for him. Maria saw his grief, and yearned to throw herself at his knees, avow all, and be allowed openly to share it. But the foolishness of suffering her fancy to dwell upon the possibility of indulging this me-

lancholy pleasure appeared so great, that she at once dismissed the thought. "For with what disdain," she reflected, "would the wealthy millowner look down upon me, who seem to be only a poor factory girl. And instead of believing me when I affirmed, that his son had once loved me, and that if he still lived his heart was shared between a parent's and a lowly maiden's love, would he not rather reproach me as the calumniator of his lost child, and revile me as one who wished to open a new spring of grief in a heart already overburdened with sorrow? Better would it be to let it all sink into oblivion, than make known that which could then be of no avail."

Time rolled on; spring was passing rapidly away, and it was not until summer had well nigh commenced that a gleam of hope appeared, to relieve, in some degree, their dark and horrible suspense. The

star was distant, and obscured by many clouds; but poor mortals are apt to build temples to hope, when no hope is to be found; and to form the brightest visions when nought but gloom and sorrow surround them.

Frequently, on a balmy evening, when the short twilight of Hindoostan has permitted the dark shades of night to envelope the Ganges in its starry veil, a small speck of light, such as the glow-worm emits, may be seen glittering on the bosom of that mighty river: launched from the shady margin by some fair hand, it is now borne along by the current towards the sea. But there is no hope that a thing so frail, and which each ripple of the almost placid water threatens to extinguish, can surmount the bore and arrive safe at the ocean.

Just as much hope would any one but a parent or a friend have gleamed from

the faint ray that conveyed so imperfect an idea of the past and present condition of Frank Morland. But both the parent and the friend hailed it as something more than this. The little messenger that brought both weal and woe consisted of a small piece of paper, dirty and torn. The writing was almost obliterated, many words, and parts of words, being quite illegible, as if defaced by water. It was accompanied by a letter from the Post-office authorities at Surat; stating that it had formed part of the contents in the mail-bag of a courier, who had been attacked in the hill passes by a company of Pindaries; the letters, after being rifled of anything valuable they contained, were torn in pieces and thrown into a swamp, where they were accidentally discovered. The superscription of some portion could be deciphered, and they were accordingly forwarded to their

destination, and amongst this number was the fragment now enclosed.

Mr. Morland was like a squirrel that has found a nut too hard for its little teeth, and after long and oft repeated attempts to crack it, is at last obliged to drop the prize to the ground, though aware of the kernel that falls with it. For, unable to make anything intelligible of the paper himself, he gave it to Mr. Wynn. The reverend gentleman, after spending several days in unwearied and almost unceasing study, presented his friend with the following transcript, which was an accurate copy, as he supposed, of the mysterious document; the words in *italics* having been added by himself.

The first portion having been torn off, it commenced as follows:—

“The natural consequence of so severe an attack of *jungle fever* was, an entire

prostration of strength. Indeed so extreme a debility remained that I could neither sit up nor write, and was, for some time, not allowed even to speak. But now I am so far recovered that I can, with assistance, draw the pen over the paper. My thoughts are far away from the place in which I now lie surrounded by wild beasts. A neighbouring village has been almost depopulated by a man-eater, whose lair may even now be in the jungle close by my hut; but I fear nought as long as I have the protection of my faithful servant. My imagination dwells on the happy —truly happy, isle of my birth, and flies ever to the spot where you and my dear friends may even now be speaking together about me. And certainly, had it not been for these thoughts, and the constant presence by my side of the lovely Maranda Grey, who, God willing, shall ere long become my bride;—had not a smile such as

hers met my gaze when, upon returning consciousness, I became aware of the *disease I had* so nearly fallen a victim to, that moment had been *the last* of my existence. *It was* her hand smoothed my pillow, and her sweet voice cheered my drooping spirits; *but for this* I might even now have been with *the dead*. But what do I write?—rather *would* I have undergone a thousand times more misery *than that* she should have been exposed to such danger. Oh! if *it please* God to spare me, my first *act* upon my arrival shall be to *present to* you, my Maranda, my bride; and then, oh, *my* father! you cannot—you may not refuse to call her daughter. But, what a vain dreamer! I *feel* as if the fever *were* returning, and my friends and *my native* land were to be seen by me no more; and if so, oh! *what* will become of my——”

Only a few of the remaining words

could be traced, and these so disconnected, that it was impossible to find out the meaning of them. But what they had discovered was satisfactory to Mr. Morland. The torch of hope was trimmed, and must not be again allowed to grow dim. Copies of the contents of the paper thus deciphered were sent both to Calcutta and Bombay, together with letters addressed to Frank; and large rewards offered to any one who would give information as to where he was. They gathered from it, also, the supposition that Frank was married; that the officer's daughter was his bride. This, under any other circumstances, would not have received the approbation Mr. Morland now gave it. But, in a moment like the present, when the pleasing idea that he should shortly be again united to his son, had filled his bosom with joy, this circumstance tended not to depress his spirits.

"If my son has thought her worthy to be his wife," said he to his friend, "it would ill become me to blight the happiness he has so dearly won."

Mr. Wynn perceived it was beyond his power to influence, in the slightest degree, the course events were now taking. He therefore made no reply that might discourage his friend's fond anticipations. He took the fragment, however, to Maria. The draught at first was sweet. "Oh!" she exclaimed, "he lives; my Frank lives." But, alas! she found he lived not for her. He who had vowed to die for her love had forsaken her; those vows were now no longer remembered; henceforward he must be nothing more to her.

This dashed away the hope to which she had still clung. Now, however, all was changed, — the confidence so long cherished was gone, gone for ever, she thought; and, in place of the fond desire,

arose a sincere wish to resign herself to the Divine will. This was not a mere lulling of the senses, a deceptive feeling, but a resignation that cost her many tears, and attained only by attending to the religious consolation of her reverend pastor, whom she now regarded as a father; for the name of friend was far too cold to express the fervency of her attachment for him,—an attachment which he returned with a parent's solicitude.

Poor Maria! Though she looked not to the future to bring again the sweets of life, still she thought her cup of sorrows could not be rendered more bitter. But the waves of the raging ocean do not follow each other with more ruthless violence than did calamities on her devoted head. Unruffled does the lagoon of a coral islet rest in the midst of the tempest; so did her breast remain calm and placid, for her griefs were all

made known to Him who is ever willing to hear the prayers, ever ready to comfort the minds of those that seek Him with a true heart.

CHAPTER III.

“Still round him hung invisibly a chain,
Which gall'd for ever, fettering though unseen,
And heavy, though it clank'd not—worn with pain,
Which pined, although it spoke not, and grew keen,
Entering, with every step he took, through many a scene.”

BYRON.

THE festival of Whitsuntide is one of the two seasons of the year during which a general cessation of labour for two or three days takes place amongst the factory operatives of Manchester, and those towns in its immediate vicinity. At this holiday period, all, both old and young, vie with each other in the newness of their attire. The little hoards laid by during many months of toil, are now lavished on silk dresses, gay shawls, or showy bonnets. But with many the household necessities

have been too urgent to admit of anything being saved out of the family's earnings. The Scotchman knows their wants will be many at this time of the year, and comes to relieve them from their difficulty. Kind fellow! he makes great sacrifices on purpose to accommodate them. "The lasses," says he, "ken they may pay just when they mak' it agreeable." Thus, by some means or other, the whole population are decked out, many of them as gaudily as the wax dolls on a popish altar; whilst others are neat, and some even lady-like in their appearance. But, be that as it may, the countenances of all are radiant with smiles, care is dismissed; they are creatures of to-day, to-morrow must take thought for itself.

The hands employed in Mr. Morland's mills ceased working on the Wednesday evening; and, on the following morning,

almost the whole of the inhabitants of the village assembled in the school-room in order to proceed, under the superintendence of the Sunday-school teachers, to one of the watering-places on the Lancashire coast. Mr. Wynn had prevailed upon Maria to accompany them, thinking it might divert her melancholy, and cause her, for the time, to forget the grief that hung so heavily over her. Her simple toilet was interrupted by Edwin, who came bounding into the room in high spirits, exclaiming,

“I am come to bid you good bye, Maria.”

“We shall go together, Edwin; Mr. Wynn came last night, and—”

“But you do not know where I am going; I did not dare to let you into the secret. Can you not imagine, from what has already passed between us?”

In a moment the truth flashed across Maria's mind.

"Oh, Edwin," said the distracted girl, clasping her brother by the hands, "do not leave me; for your own sake, for mine do not. Think of it again, I entreat you. Oh, think what a rash, what a foolish step it would be."

"I know, dear sister, it is rash, very rash; but the more I thought about it, the more fixed became my determination to make an effort to free ourselves from the yoke they have put upon us. Since we last talked upon this subject, I have suffered every indignity that could be heaped upon a poor orphan. As long as you were cheerful, I thought little about it,—enduring all without a murmur; but when sorrow hung over your brow, and you pined for the sweet fields and the pure air, leading memory back to the happy scenes of our childhood, then it was I resolved to make the attempt."

"But, Edwin, you forget that Mr. Morland is bound to keep you here. He will have to send after you; and, when brought back again,—Oh, think of it, Edwin. And as to myself, there is something more than a remembrance of the past that makes me less happy than I once was. I must not, I cannot leave this place at present. And then, perhaps, it will not always be as it is now. Mr. Frank may even yet return; and, if so, I am sure he will protect us; will he not, Edwin?"

Maria was too much affected to say more, and Edwin began to waver in his resolution, when some one shouted out his name, telling him it was six o'clock, and time to be off.

"Then you are not alone?" said she.

"No; Tom Wright is going along with me. He says he is tired of the factory; but I fancy that is not all. The girl that

jilted him is come to work at the mill again, and so, like a sensible fellow, he is getting out of the way."

Maria found she could not prevail upon Edwin to relinquish his project; she, therefore, added her little stock of money to his, embraced him, and bade him God's speed,—and so he left her.

The poor girl found herself too unnerved by this interview to accompany the merry party in their holiday excursion, and remained a long time absorbed in deep and melancholy thought. She had not opposed her brother's departure with so much earnestness, or at least not with the same perseverance, as when he first mentioned his plan. Then she was endued with the full confidence, that her Frank would, ere long, return, and so there would be a change. But now that motive for restraining her brother's ardour was removed. He had no tie so strong

as her own to keep him at the mill, and it now appeared only selfishness in her to restrain him, when there were many and weighty reasons why he should not remain there. His health had suffered from the confinement of the mill; and his morals, which had as yet been proof against the many temptations that assailed him on every hand, might yield at last, disheartened by the constant struggle; and, if so—oh, the thought was too terrible to be entertained; she prayed God to guard him.

Edwin's absence was not noticed until evening, when the names were called over previous to returning home. The railway train was detained whilst a long and fruitless search was made for the missing youth. As this was the most untoward incident of the day's excursion, Mr. Wynn felt particularly annoyed about it, and called early the following morning at the

Lodge, to learn if Maria had heard anything of him. She acquainted her guardian with the whole affair, which he at once pronounced to be a precipitate and ill-judged step, and one that was much more likely to bring ruin and misery to the two youths than anything else. He looked at it with the cool judgment of age; Edwin had only seen it through the deceptive glass of youthful imagination, impatient of restraint.

The reverend gentleman conceived it to be his duty to acquaint Mr. Morland with the circumstance, and so leave him to act in the matter as he thought fit. Maria dreaded lest her master's displeasure should fall too heavily on her brother, knowing her own utter inability to shield him.

Mr. Morland's first intention was to take no step in the matter, but allow the youth to go; he perceived, however, upon referring to the original bond, that Edwin

was one of those he was obliged by stipulation to retain; he accordingly wrote to Mr. Hawke, the clerk to the Hardston Board of Guardians, acquainting him that a youth, whose name he gave, had left home, it was supposed, with the design of returning to his native county. And if the Board thought it of any consequence, he (Mr. Morland) would despatch a man on the track of the fugitive. The return post brought an answer to this letter. It ran as follows:—

“The urgent necessity of an immediate pursuit of the incorrigible young scoundrel, St. Crost, compelled me to write, upon receipt of your note, without a moment’s delay. As a gentleman, sir, I am sure you will do everything in your power to prevent the young dog from arriving here. Relying upon this, I shall not do more than merely remind you of the obligation you are under in regard to

this boy. I shall not fail to lay the matter before the Board; and, in the meantime, a man shall be stationed at the small town of Reedford, to act in concert with the person you will send. An instant attention to this affair is of the highest importance.

“BRUTUS HAWKE,

“Clerk to the Hardston Union.”

Mr. Morland was much surprised at the abrupt manner, as also with the strong expressions and earnest tone used by his correspondent, who appeared to be attaching more consequence to the affair than he thought it called for. A boy had run away from his master, and the whole country must be put on the hue and cry after him. However, he resolved to comply, and a trusty man was forthwith despatched. He was to proceed to Sheffield,

and from there, by Derby, to Peterborough, and so to Reedford.

But Edwin and his companion had acted with more caution than might have been expected, judging from the youth of the one, and the inexperience of the other. They went first to Manchester, hoping to baffle their pursuers better in so large a town than they could in the smaller one near their village. From Manchester they proceeded on foot to Wakefield, and thence to Lincoln, at which place they remained until their money was exhausted. After spending a month here, working in the fields, they resolved to pass through the Fens, and so reach Suffolk by the Little Ouse, for on this stream was "the old house at home," that Edwin so ardently longed once more to behold. Having no money, they were obliged to rely upon the hospitality of the country people, and they never found this to fail; for gene-

rosity appeared to form a part of the disposition of all, rather than a rare virtue of the few only. But the interest felt for the fate of the young rambles was always increased when their story was made known to the group of rustics, who assembled to share the evening repast, after the labours of the day were over. And often would the honest dame—not satisfied with one night's hearty welcome—detain her willing guests to join the village sports; for the soliciting blush of some rustic maiden would second her mother's request, and never plead in vain. Their narrative was always listened to with attention by the stout yeomen, who now regarded, with feelings not at all akin to brotherly affection, that portion of their fellow-countrymen who were engaged in the staple manufacture of the kingdom; for it was through their influence that the recently adopted system of legislation, which was apparently bringing ruin and misery

upon the tenant farmer, had been established; it is, therefore, natural to conclude, that the disclosures now made were highly gratifying, inasmuch as they proved that the cotton mills were not the Elysiums some had made them out to be, nor the process of spinning and weaving an occupation which, whilst improving the mind, invigorated the body.

Thus the youths, pleasing both old and young, passed on from house to house until they arrived at a small town on the Norfolk bank of the Little Ouse. Edwin, who had formed no plan for the future, but left everything to the guidance of chance, was in high spirits at the thoughts of being once more so near his native village—almost within sight of it; and that the next day would realize the fond aspirations of years. Whilst his companion, who had never, before commencing the adventure, been out of the range

of mill smoke, luxuriated in the pure air and healthy exercise.

As no one had yet questioned them, nor any opposition been offered during the whole journey, they became less guarded in their movements, never imagining that any trouble had been taken in looking after them. Accordingly, they entered the inn, intending to put up there for the night; for as home was so near they might now spend the money they had received on the way. Whilst the happy youngsters were enjoying their evening meal, a man dressed in the habit of a farm servant entered the room, but being apparently a wayfarer like themselves, they took no notice of his presence. He had been listening attentively to their discourse; and gradually edging himself up to the table at which they were seated, entered into conversation with them. He said he was going the next day to Bury

St. Edmunds, and would give them a lift on the road if they were going that way. The easy, open manner in which he spoke would have dispelled their suspicions, if they had entertained any. And thanking him for his offer, they declined it, saying they were only going as far as the next village.

During the conversation that ensued they allowed some observations to escape them, disclosing where they came from. Upon this, their civil companion closed the door, and addressing himself to Edwin, said, with the coolness displayed by a London detective, "I guess you are the young'un I've been waiting here for these six weeks, but I've cotched you at last. You are my prisoner, sir."

They were both taken by surprise; Edwin laid hold of his walking-stick. "Come, Tom," said he, "we are two to one, so I think we may escape yet."

The landlord hearing the scuffle, came to the rescue; and the young men being overpowered, Edwin was taken in charge, but his companion they liberated, and informed him he might remain where he was. He chose rather to share the fortunes of his friend, and return to Lancashire with him.

So long a time had elapsed since her brother's departure, that Maria began to imagine it possible he might have eluded all his pursuers, the man sent by Mr. Morland having long since returned without any clue as to his movements. "Might he not, even then," thought she, "be rambling amongst the scenes of their childhood, and surrounded by familiar faces, which, though not seen for many long and weary years, were still as fresh to memory's eye as though the parting had been but yesterday;" so futile are the attempts of misery and toil to efface the

bright spots from life's chequered way. She did not envy her brother the enjoyment fancy had created for him, but she wished most fervently to be his companion in body as well as in mind; to mark the smile of welcome, and receive the blessings from lips, the beloved accents of which she dared not hope to hear again. But there was an alloy for such moments, even for these pleasing flights of thought, when the imagination, leaving the cotton-mill, flew to woodland glades and rural scenes,—it was the knowledge that her only earthly friend to whom she could make known her thoughts was much displeased at Edwin's boyish frolick. The good man forgot that the youth of eighteen summers regards both present and future with far different feelings than those that sway the mind of him who is fast hastening to the completion of the three score years and ten. But Maria's

flattering day-dreams and Mr. Wynn's displeasure were both dispelled by the arrival of the two truant youths. T6m Wright was of course dismissed; but, through Mr. Wynn's intercession in his behalf, Mr. Morland permitted him to resume his work; whilst poor Edwin, who took all the blame to himself, was loaded with abuse, which he bore with a contemptuous indifference. The monotonous occupations of the mill were no longer cheered by the prospect of release, and the dull routine now appeared doubly tedious.

The news received from India threw no light as yet upon Frank's movements. At Bombay the instructions sent out to the agent had been acted upon, but without result. The accounts from Calcutta were, therefore, looked forward to with great anxiety. His mysterious fate

formed the general topic of conversation amongst the villagers and workpeople. Maria now heard his name from every tongue, and had become so resigned to her lot, that she could join, even with calmness, in the discourse that frequently passed at the lodge upon the subject.

With old Hargreaves, "Mesthur Frank," as he termed him, had from childhood been an especial favourite. The anecdotes of his infancy, and the honourable and manly conduct of his riper years, constituted a theme on which he delighted to dwell, and which was never exhausted. And nothing was more pleasing to Maria than to sit and listen for hours together to the old man's stories; for the very thought that she had once been loved by the hero of them, was, even yet, she could not tell why, the greatest pleasure she enjoyed. She loved him still, but

dared not confess it even to her own heart; having long compelled herself to believe, that if his life were spared, and she prayed God it might be, it was spared for another.

CHAPTER IV.

"Providence, that ever waking eye,
Looks down with pity on the feeble toil
Of mortals lost to hope, and lights them safe
Through all this dreary labyrinth of fate."

THOMPSON.

WHAT can be more heartrending, more painfully startling, than to hear amidst the howl and roar of the wind and waves, the sudden earnest cry of "A man overboard!" It is a shriek of horror, the almost certain death knell of some unfortunate being; some brave and generous heart, that a few short moments before had beat high with joy and hope. Perhaps he may have formed one of a small but fearless band, who, after braving a hundred storms, are now approaching

their native shore; their bark freighted with the produce of many a clime. His father's cot will never more receive him, and the tears of his beloved one will flow in vain. What a tumult of thought rushes through the brain of each brother sailor as he strains his aching eyes in vain attempts to pierce the cloud of spray with which the angry waves envelop the ship as they roll by her in their headlong course. "Who is he," asks each one of himself, "that is now struggling over his watery grave? Which of those joyous and familiar faces will be absent at the evening mess?" Even in that little band each has a friend more dear than the rest, whose hand he grasps and thanks his God it is not he.

Those, and only those, who have heard this cry, and experienced these sensations, can form an adequate idea of the terror that seizes on all, even the most obdurate,

when the monotony of a cotton-mill and the silence of the workers is broken in upon by the voice of some one, distinctly heard above the rumbling of a thousand wheels, as he exclaims, in accents that fix despair in every heart, "Stop the engine, stop the engine!" A circumstance of this nature occurred at one of Mr. Morland's mills a few weeks after Edwin's capture.

The day was one of excessive heat, and the atmosphere inside the mill was almost overpowering. All, from the over-looker to the card-tender, were awaiting with impatience the signal for a release; when they were alarmed by a cry, happily now unfrequent, "A man caught!" Every eye was directed to the main shaft, that ran along the centre of the room near the ceiling: for along with this, entangled by a strap, something was seen revolving. That which had a moment before been a scene of order was instantly

converted into one of dire confusion. But as the assistance of the workers could be of no avail to their unfortunate companion, until the powerful agent that moved all had ceased its resistless rounds, time was given for those who had relations in the room to recognise a husband or a brother amongst the eager expectants.

Most of the females had assembled near the scene of the accident, but Maria remained at her place. The first shock over she was about to leave the room; but before doing so, ranged her eyes along it to find Edwin. She could not see him. Is it he? Oh the terrible anxiety of suspense caused by the thought. It was as though the misery of years had been concentrated into one minute of overwhelming solicitude. Her countenance became deadly pale as the speed of the shaft was gradually diminished; when

it ceased, her worst fears were confirmed. Her first impulse was to fly towards the spot, but the struggle of the last few moments, together with the awful truth so suddenly revealed, was too much for a being so delicate and susceptible as Maria to bear; she sunk on the floor, and, happily, became unconscious to all that was passing around her.

The shrieks and groans of the females, previously deadened by the noise of the machinery, now rose on every side, as impotent as they were unmeaning to those who, though silently, were better employed. The name of God might have been heard, invoked by lips that, perhaps, for many years, had never used that holy name except to couple it with a profane oath.

Edwin was released as carefully as possible, and placed on some loose cotton, where he lay as one dead. A messenger

was immediately despatched for Mr. Leach, the certifying surgeon of the district; and whether that gentleman was impelled by the urgency of the case, or the incitement of the fee allowed by Government for such services, matters nothing, he was promptly on the spot.

In the meantime a few of the young women were attempting to restore Maria to consciousness. They had got a little water, and having loosed her dress, which came high up to the neck, bathed her temples and forehead with it. The symmetry of form and countenance of the lifeless girl drew forth exclamations of admiration from those around her.

"Well," remarked one, "if hoo is'ent bonniest wench as ere ha seed."

"Ay," rejoined another, "hoos a graidly pratty face; hoos moor likert one ote gentlefolk tell a factory lass; an I'st neer believe but what hoos bin among um nother, for hoos so weel spokken."

“Go—look, wenches,” said a young woman, not remarkable for the purity of her dress nor the cleanliness of her person; “a yo dun but talk; hoos nobbut a brokken dane mante-maker fro one oth’ warkhases; hoos too prim for’t be out else.”

Poor Maria’s ear was happily closed to these and many similar remarks; and a deep sigh, warning the by-standers that reason was about to resume her deserted seat, hushed every voice. Gently opening her eyes, she raised them with such an imploring gaze to the face of the female on whose lap she reclined, that the last speaker felt she had given utterance to language which her heart told her was false.

“Is he alive?” said she, in an almost inaudible whisper.

“Hi, he’s noan deod yet,” was the reply; “but ha yerd um say a bit sin when I wer speerin abate, as they’d welly

lefer heed deed afore they'd tan him dane, it's made such a mash on him."

Comforters like these, under whose care Maria found herself, were not likely to impart much consolation. But the knowledge that her brother still lived acted as a most powerful restorative; and having, in some degree, regained her wonted composure, she was on the point of going to him when Mr. Wynn entered the room. The reverend gentleman was much distressed when he learnt the name of the sufferer; for he had hastened to the spot immediately upon hearing of the accident, little imagining to whom his service of love was to be rendered. "And poor Maria," thought he, "her sorrows were many before, God knows, but his will be done." He overruled her purpose of seeing Edwin, under the plea that it would excite him: but promised to have him conveyed to the Lodge, if Mr. Leach

thought he could be removed so great a distance without increased danger.

The surgeon's report, after examining the unfortunate youth, was, that he had sustained a compound fracture of the left arm and two fingers of the hand, a fracture of the right thigh, besides many other bruises and contusions; but judging from the general appearance of the patient, he felt confident no internal injury had been produced. And it was this alone that afforded a slight ground for hope, that by constant medical attendance and good nursing his life might eventually be spared. A couch meanwhile had been placed in the small room that opened into the park, and on this, after undergoing the operation of setting the broken limbs, Edwin was placed. The earliest beams of the morning sun found Maria watching at her brother's bedside, where she had remained since the pre-

vious evening, having never left him for a moment; nor would she have done, even after so long a vigil, if Dame Hargreaves had not insisted upon her taking a few hours' repose.

Edwin's slumbers had been short and restless; and though he required almost constant attention, still Maria found time to offer up prayers to Him who alone is able to save poor helpless mortals in such a time of need. And thus the occupations of mind and body tended to banish from her mind any reflections on her own forlorn and helpless state. Nor was it until she returned into the sick room, and the heavy breathing of her brother indicated sleep, that a thought of self crossed her mind. The future, too dark and cheerless for human contemplation to bear, she left to God; but a vision of the past was flitting before her, when Mr.

Wynn, accompanied by his lady, called at the lodge.

The reverend gentleman's wife had always received Maria with a kindness that showed she entertained a similar opinion of her worth to that evinced by her husband. But still their intercourse had not, hitherto, been characterized by the tenderness and cordiality which was displayed at this interview. Maria's lowly station might, perhaps, have barred the lady from forming a close intimacy, especially as the leading points of her history, her attachment to Frank Morland, and her subsequent desertion by him, were, up to the present time, unknown to her. Now, however, her woman's heart yearned with sympathy towards a being so young, so lovely, and so desolate.

Maria advanced to meet her, and was

greeting her in the diffident manner she had always done, when Mrs. Wynn, embracing her, exclaimed—

“My dear girl, consider me from this moment as a friend, a mother, if I am worthy of such a title. I know all your wrongs, all your troubles, and the noble way in which you have borne them. May I hope, my child, that you will receive me, not as a friend only, but as more than a friend?”

Maria's heart was too full for words. She looked first at Edwin, his countenance pale as death itself, and then at her friends, until the tears which burst from her eyes expressed, more eloquently than language, the depth of the gratitude she felt. She hid her face in the lady's bosom and wept. The scene was too affecting even for Mr. Wynn, accustomed, as he had long been, to meet with grief

in every form; yet never before had he seen it combined with so much gentleness.


"Maria," said he, "you must leave the mill; we cannot think of allowing you to remain there any longer. Mrs. Wynn has been wishing for a young companion to reside with us at the Parsonage, and she is resolved now to have no one but yourself, and for this I greatly commend her."

"Oh why, my dear madam," replied Maria, when her emotion allowed her to speak, "should you feel such an interest in a poor orphan? My mere thanks, all I have to offer, can never express my gratefulness. But at present I cannot accept of your proffered kindness."

"My dear girl," said Mrs. Wynn, "we do not wish to take you from your brother's bedside, nor that you should remove from

the lodge until his health is restored, but only that you should not again return to the mill."

"You, madam, and you, sir, my best, my long-tried, and, indeed, until to-day, my only friend, may perhaps think me very foolish, nay, even very wayward, in forming the determination I have. When Mr. Frank Morland left England, I told him the proof of the constancy of my affection should be, in his finding, when he returned, that I had continued in the mill without the voice of scandal having imputed anything against me. I have so far, by your guidance and counsel, sir, been enabled to perform my promise with integrity; and, through God's assistance, I intend to continue in the same course as long as there is the remotest possibility of Mr. Frank being again restored to his friends. And should events be thus consummated, and I am absolved by his own lips, oh



then, how happy shall I be to fly to you, if you will receive me."

"Receive you, my child!" said Mr. Wynn. "If you had consented to come to us now, we would have welcomed you with gladness; but, after your resolution, freely taken and so nobly adhered to, is no longer binding, the Parsonage shall be your home, please God, as long as it is ours."

"I am not acting thus," continued Maria, "out of any spirit of pride or resentment against Mr. Frank Morland, because he has ceased to remember that he once loved me; my regard for him, a dearer term I dare not use, is still too great to permit me, even for a moment, to entertain any such thoughts; and, after completing the pledge I gave him, I must, if possible, quit his sight for ever; it would be sinful in me to lessen, by my presence, the happiness he may yet enjoy

in the society of her he has honoured with his love."

About three weeks had elapsed after the foregoing conversation took place, when the event about to be related occurred. Although only the close of the month of October, all the forest trees, except the oak and the beech, were entirely despoiled of their foliage; and, even on these, only a few brown, sooty leaves still rustled in the autumn breeze. Maria having left her employment a short time before the mill stopped, had put off her working attire, as was her custom, and after assuming a neat evening dress seated herself by the side of Edwin's couch, for it was there she spent most of her leisure hours, sewing, or reading aloud to him. He was now reported out of danger; the inflammation had subsided, and everything progress favourably. This happy event was attributed by Mr. Leech mainly

to the robust health his patient enjoyed at the time the accident happened, and which had been acquired whilst on his runaway excursion.

The rays of the declining sun were partially obscured by a slight mist; but as they fell upon the countenance of the youthful sufferer, they appeared to impart a cheerfulness to his features, such as Maria had not before observed. She had been reading aloud that beautiful and now appropriate song, one of the sweet Psalmist's most divine compositions, commencing, "Bless the Lord, O my soul; and all that is within me, bless His holy name."

When the music of her voice died away, she remained watching, noiselessly as a mother hanging over the cot of her first-born, a gentle slumber that was stealing slowly over him. Upon perceiving that he slept, she placed the hand which she

held in her own by his side, and, raising her head, found that they were not alone. She rose to greet her reverend friend, supposing it to have been he; but it was not. No! Frank Morland stood at her side; his manly countenance beaming with joy. The moment his presence was discovered, he clasped Maria to his heart, and imprinted a kiss upon those lips on which, many weary months before, he had sealed a vow that bound him to regard his love as sacred as his life; a love which nothing but death was to dissolve. Had he forgotten this? Maria was told he had.

Overcome by surprise and contending emotions, she had not the power to resist Frank's sudden movement. But almost instantaneously she disengaged herself from his embrace, and addressing him, said, with a dignity she had never assumed, "Mr. Morland, at one time I.

thought you to be a gentleman and a man of honour, but such conduct as this little becomes any one who esteems either of those titles as worth retaining. If the position in which we are now placed towards each other had not of itself been sufficient to restrain your passion within the bonds of decorum, your better judgment ought to have told you, that even a common respect for the marriage rite demands ——”

“Marriage rite—respect for the marriage rite!” exclaimed Frank, in accents of the bitterest anguish; “are my fondest hopes blighted then? Have I been lured on, living from month to month sustained only by a bright but delusive dream, in order that I might be sunk to the lowest depths of despair, at the very moment when I thought to crown my own joy by completing the happiness of a being dearer to me than all the world besides? Would

to God I had perished in the wilds of India for then I should have died in the bliss of ignorance!"

The thought that passed through his mind "harrowed up his very soul," like a flash of lightning when it blasts the fairest bough of some beautiful forest tree. He stood, as one stupified, gazing at Maria; his countenance now so pale, that even the tropical sun was despoiled of half his victory; but at the same time it was marked with tokens of the deepest misery. Maria repented having spoken so harshly, when she saw the change her words had produced in him who a few minutes before appeared to be in the enjoyment of the choicest gifts that nature can bestow, health and hope. But now he resembled some poor shipwrecked mariner, that, utterly helpless himself, sees all he holds most dear perishing before his eyes.

"Oh, sir," said she, "forgive me if I

have said anything that displeases you. But I spoke in a moment of excitement, and imagined not that in alluding to your marriage, after you yourself had in ——”

Frank heard no more, but sprang to her side, and taking her by the hand exclaimed, “Then you are still my own, my Maria? You are not united to another?”

“No, sir, nor ever shall be. For he whose love I once had, ceased to remember me and married another. But I—I must never love again.

“I am not married—nor whilst Frank Morland has the power of remembrance will he forget the troth he plighted to Maria St. Crost.”

When the trembling girl heard Frank’s avowal of the constancy of his affection, it acted upon her mind like the first gentle shower on the arid plains of Arabia.

The irresistible tide of joy that after the first moment flowed in, covering with

its pure waters the sandbank of despair upon which hope had been so long shipwrecked, was too strong to be grasped instantaneously by human intellect, so weak and impotent is it. Overcome by its impetuosity, and trembling in every limb, she would have sunk to the ground had not Frank supported her. All she said was, "But, Maranda Grey?"

Though the words were few, the expression that beamed from her eyes, as she looked up and gazed into those of her lover, asked in silence that which her tongue would have refused to utter.

"Maranda Gray," said he, "only fascinated me—I never loved her."

"But was it not she that watched over you when the fever raged in your veins? Did she not smooth your sick pillow, and ——?"

"What is this you talk of, my dearest, dearest girl? It was of you I wrote,—

your name I mentioned. When I left England my love for you was fresh and ardent; time has ripened it—and I return to my native land with the same love as deeply planted in my heart as life itself. But, my father—I have not yet seen him. Is he still ignorant of the treasure that lies at his gate? Still unacquainted with our attachment? I see he is. I must go and break the matter to him at once, and in the morning you shall know all.”

Maria remained a long time gazing into the gloom, as though the point at which Frank's figure had been lost to her still retained his image. She then fell on her knees to thank God for so special a mark of his favour, in having granted more than she had dared to ask. Her only supplication for many months had been, that Frank might be restored to his sorrowing father. What a change so short a space of time had wrought in her

life's future prospect. From the poor deserted girl, the all but friendless orphan, banished, as she thought, for ever, from the place of her birth with all its happy associations of childhood, and watching by the sick bed of an only brother, she became suddenly transformed into one of the most blissful of human beings. Frank was still her Frank; that thought outweighed every other. She wished for nothing more on earth. Let him remain rich, she was able to share his wealth without pride; let him be as poor as herself, she would, by her cheerfulness, alleviate his poverty.

Not a doubt of his sincerity entered her guileless heart, and, indeed, so far from having any misgivings, she reproached herself for allowing that letter ~~which, if written by him, might not have been correctly deciphered, ever to have~~

caused a suspicion of his dishonour to obtain even a temporary abode in her heart. For a heart such as hers was formed only for a pure and perfect love.

Edwin's slumbers had apparently remained undisturbed by Frank's hasty apparition; but the passionate force of his language was such as to penetrate even the listless ear of sleep—"Maria," said he, when he awoke, "I have just had a most pleasing dream; a vision too sweet to be realized. I thought we wandered as children, hand in hand, along one of our own native woodland paths; when suddenly young Morland stepped from behind a coppice. I thought he spoke aloud and bewailed some heavy misfortune. 'They have broken all our vows—they have given her to another,' he exclaimed. Presently he came towards us and took you up in his arms, when immediately

you became changed into your natural appearance; and when my dream ceased, young Morland was at your feet."

"But this was not all a dream, Edwin; Mr. Frank is safe, it was his voice you heard. We have now nothing to fear, he will be to us a protector and a friend."

She would have said, "More than a friend," if she had said all her heart prompted her to utter. But the news was too joyous, too startling, to be so hastily imparted. It must enter his mind as imperceptibly as the dawn precedes the brilliant sunrise, or as the evening dew moistening the parched herbage after a day of fiery heat.

CHAPTER V.

"When Reason, that should still in bounds restrain
Each sudden warmth, to Passion gives the rein;
And blindfold Rage our hand or lips can move
To injure those who merit most our love;
Though we with tears our errors past bemoan,
Such tears can never for th' offence atone."

ARISTO.

SANGUINE as had been Mr. Morland's hopes of once more beholding his son, still, when mail after mail arrived without bringing any clue by which so mysterious a silence could be explained, he found it impossible to allay the thoughts that began to harass his mind; and the news of a catastrophe he at one time so much dreaded, he now almost wished to receive; and as he eagerly perused each letter from India, his hand, firm and

steady before taking up the paper, trembled as he read on only to learn that another period of solicitude must be submitted to, another term of misery passed through, merely that a like disappointment might follow.

On the evening in question he was seated near the bay window in his study; it looked out upon a small lawn, through which was a path to a private door in that wing of the mansion. An empty post-bag, together with a few open letters, lay on a writing-case near him. His countenance, partly shaded by his hand, the arm of which rested on the table, betokened disappointment and extreme melancholy, rendered more observable by the listless gaze with which his eyes were directed towards the window.

The last few months had wrought a great change in his appearance. Old age

was advancing with more rapid strides than under ordinary circumstances time is permitted to lead on the foe. His whole mien gave testimony of a deep and constant mental anxiety.

Suddenly, yea, quick as thought, he started up, and in an instant was standing at the window,—but there was no object visible; nothing to disturb the gloomy stillness, except only the fitful breeze as it sighed among the naked branches of an adjoining tree, from which it detached the last lingering leaf, that descended in eddies like a flake of snow, and fell on the ground before him. “My hopes,” he exclaimed, “are like that dead leaf; its fall, delayed from day to day, comes at last, and an eternal winter succeeds. I must have dreamt—but that can scarcely be, for if so, the vision would not have remained so distinct. I should

have seen him, too, as last I saw him, and not as he just now appeared to me,—changed by climate and the lapse of time.”

Mr. Morland’s reverie was interrupted by a footman, who entered the room in a state of great fright, exclaiming, “Oh, sir, I have just seen Mr. Frank’s ghost: he came in at the postern door without opening it!”

Mr. Morland was not superstitious, or he might have been alarmed at his own phantom being thus rendered doubly mysterious. But as he was possessed by no such fear, he at once resolved to ascertain the truth of the man’s statement; and for this purpose was passing quickly out of the room, when he encountered at the doorway, not “the baseless fabric of a vision,” but his only son—his long lost Frank.

Who could picture the feelings of such a moment; when speech, deprived of its

power, becomes utterly incapable of expressing the vehemence of the emotion that seizes upon the heart of man: human language is far too earthly a medium to convey an adequate idea of a bliss like this. Surely such a meeting may be regarded as a faint representation of one reserved for many in that abode from which all the evil passions of man are excluded, never again to interfere with the joys of the happy united ones. But here, alas! how soon may even such a heavenly scene as this be transformed into one of earth.

After the long and happy greeting, came the earnest inquiries as to the welfare of each. Mr. Morland was playfully chiding his son for keeping them all in suspense, since writing that almost unintelligible letter, when he remembered the lady protectress mentioned in it. "But how is it you are alone, Frank?"

continued he. "Where is your amiable and ever watchful nurse,—may I say—your bride ere this?"

"She yet remains what she has been through affliction and doubt,—my affianced bride only."

"I am afraid you have acted imprudently, Frank. Many a lady's fair fame has been roughly handled by the world with less provocation than you have given it."

"But, my dear father, nothing could induce the noble minded girl to become your daughter, without having first obtained your consent to our union. Before I left England she——"

"Before you left England! why, Frank, one of your letters states, that you had been in India eight months before you met Maranda Grey; and at that meeting you saw her for the first time."

"There has been treachery at work,

sir; some foul, deep treachery. I left her to whom I was betrothed in England, and no power on earth shall force me to wed another."

"Well Frank, here are your letters; the one dated December last, is certainly in your own handwriting, but the other I cannot answer for. Mr. Wynn was the only person able to decipher it, and here is his version of it."

Frank read with grief and astonishment the construction put upon his letter: a construction so contrary to the original meaning of the words. This explained to him Maria's conduct, and accounted for Mr. Morland's being unacquainted with their loves. "My dear father," said he, "you have been misled: the former letter was written in a fever of excitement; in the other, it was not of Maranda Grey that I wrote,—fool that I was—I never loved her! But the slight hope

that I entertained of ever again quitting the shores of Hindostan, urged me, contrary to my promise, to acquaint you that I had given my heart and hand to Maria St. Crost, beseeching you to receive her as a daughter. Little did I imagine the weeks, yea, months of misery I was causing. What must Mr. Wynn, my oldest, my best esteemed friend, have thought? Oh, how I long to tell him he has deceived himself. And poor Maria; they persuaded her she was forsaken."

"Maria St. Crost—Maria St. Crost: a lady I never heard of, Frank. I have a faint recollection, though, of having heard the name before."

"She came here from Suffolk, sir, along with the other young people, but—

"Come, come, Frank! you are jesting. I am impatient to become acquainted with a being so interesting and amiable as the one you painted in such glowing colours."

"This is not a time I should have chosen for sportiveness, sir," replied Frank. "I stated the fact: she has been living since that time with old Dame Hargreaves, at the Lodge."

Frank launched forth into an eulogy on Maria's many virtues, picturing, with the brilliant colours of a lover's imagination, the graces of her mind, and commending her extreme modesty. But Mr. Morland was so amazed, so utterly confounded by the announcement, that for a few moments he could not fully comprehend the real state of his son's affections; he therefore allowed him to proceed without interruption. But as the truth unfolded itself to him, the proud spirit,—which, though humbled by affliction, and long dormant in his breast, was not yet subdued,—once more assumed an entire sway over his thoughts and feelings; and to such an extent as to obliterate all

trace of the joy he had felt on beholding his son. Paternal tenderness was absorbed by shame and anger.

"What!" he exclaimed, "marry a common woman out of the streets—a factory girl! You must be mad, sir, to think for a moment that I should consent to such an union; that I should permit——"

At this instant, the forcible language in which Mr. Morland was expressing the great displeasure he felt was stopped by the entrance of Mr. Wynn; for as the servants at the hall were aware of the interest the reverend gentleman took in anything that related to their young master, the footman no sooner became convinced that Frank was present in body as well as in spirit, than he immediately ran to the Parsonage to convey the welcome intelligence. Mr. Wynn's speedy arrival at the hall testified how correctly

the man had judged. Frank sprang forward to greet his reverend friend, who received him with a salutation kind, affectionate, and sincere; but as he well knew the purport of the thoughts that his presence must bring into the mind of him from whose lips a word of reconciliation would be more esteemed than the praise of thousands, so was he fully prepared for the shade of melancholy that he now easily detected, knowing the cause of it, in the old man's smile of welcome, and the slight reproach with which his voice was modulated. The pleasure of removing the cloud which had so long hung over his honour, and by its darkness almost obliterated the strong affection his friend had once evinced for him, he felt would confer more joy upon both than the happiness of the meeting itself. He therefore hesitated not a moment in giving vent to his emotions, though by so doing his

feelings obtained the mastery of his prudence, for he thus unguardedly made his father acquainted with the fact of the reverend gentleman having been long cognizant of his love for Maria.

"I know, Mr. Wynn," said he, "from what I have learned since my return, that when your thoughts followed me into my exile, as they frequently must have done, and our parting words recurred to your memory, how your generous heart must have pitied the frailty of that man in whose bosom the strongest and noblest of passions was impotent for good. You imagined me to be a deceiver; but I was only mad, or you might with justice have styled me wretch, villain; no name could have been too opprobrious for me to bear. And what grieves me the more is, that Maria, constrained by the apparent conclusiveness of the evidence, should have believed that I, who would more readily

part with all the good gifts the world may have in store for me than lose her love, had not only sought, but actually gained the hand of another."

"But is it not so? Were our suspicions unfounded? Oh, for my sake, for Maria's, tell me the truth."

"It is that letter, Mr. Wynn, that fatal letter. Had you only read Maria St. Crost for Maranda Grey, then all this wretchedness would have been spared, for her, for you, for all of us."

"And I, Frank,—I have been the unwilling cause of this. But now our joy will be the purer, the more lasting for being tried in the crucible of adversity. I greeted you as the son of Mr. Morland only; now, let me embrace you as my friend."

"But, Maria? how did she endure such hopeless misery?"

Before Mr. Wynn could answer this

question, Mr. Morland put an end to their discourse. He had retired into one of the window recesses, upon perceiving that his presence was either unobserved or not regarded by the reverend gentleman. This gave him a little time for reflection. He resolved to be firm in his mien, and, at the same time, cool and temperate. But when he learned from his son's language that Mr. Wynn was privy to the connexion he had formed, or was intending to form, his anger knew no bounds. For instead of finding in his friend, as he expected, an able ally, and one whose counsel would be revered equally with his own, he discovered him, to his infinite surprise, to have been his son's confidant from the very commencement of the affair.

Mr. Morland walked almost close to where they were standing, and partly seated himself upon the table. The tone

of voice in which he spoke was low; but, to those who were acquainted with him, it boded anything but a pleasant issue.

"Well, Mr. Wynn," commenced he, "I cannot compliment you upon the dignity of the office you have thought proper to assume; though I have no doubt you will fulfil it in as able a manner as any one else. Of course I allude to your standing father to this fatherless, discreet, retiring, young woman; she who has contrived, in a few months, or may be weeks, to captivate the fancy of a young man as ignorant of the deep-planned stratagems used by adventurous females of her class as any person well could be; and she has done this through her excessive modesty!"

"If it is your intention to imply, Mr. Morland," rejoined his friend, "that I have, in an underhand way, encouraged your son in this matter, your imputation

is neither gentlemanly nor just. If you had requested an explanation of the way in which I became acquainted with a transaction, generally of too private a nature to be revealed to one of my age, I would have done it with pleasure, and also given my reasons for remaining so long silent on the subject; and, I think, should thus have convinced you that the impression you form of the young woman's motives and conduct, and of my duplicity, are, to say the least, rather hasty."

"I merely reiterated my son's statements, Mr. Wynn; judging of the motives from the facts I have just unintentionally overheard, the whole circumstance is as plain to me as possible. Here is a girl sent from a workhouse——"

"I beg your pardon, sir," said Frank, interrupting him; "Maria never was in a workhouse in her life."

"Say, rather, she tells you so. For

my part, I prefer trusting the account given by the Board of Guardians; who, you must remember, represented such to be the case. Well, it so happens that she is possessed of a good figure, and a pretty face,—for now I remember to have frequently seen the girl,—and so at once concludes that, with a little assumed modesty, and by playing a cunning game, she may make both serviceable.”

“My dear father, if you only knew Maria, I am sure all these prejudices would vanish. A few moments’ conversation would suffice to remove all, and show how——”

“Come, come, Frank, don’t talk nonsense. I have got beyond the age when simplicity, and smooth language, and all that sort of thing, are more powerful than reason. I must, nevertheless, give her credit for having shown herself to be a girl of spirit, as well as possessed of con-

siderable discretion; she plays for the highest prize, and wins him; but, like an able tactician, does not consider herself safe without an abettor,—one whose ascendancy over her lovesick swain may keep him to his promise. She fixes upon you, my reverend friend, as the person most to be desired, and again succeeds. But how she has been able to delude you both, and that for two years, I cannot imagine. She must have some peculiar charm; perhaps a love-spell she brought along with her.”

“However unconsciously, you speak the truth, sir,” said Mr. Wynn; “she does possess a charm; and that so powerful, that if you, sir, could be brought within its influence, it would so bias your mind, that, in spite of all you now say or think, you would be just as earnest and sincere in your praise, as you now are in her derogation. And, so far from being

chargeable with having beguiled your son to make this engagement with her, she is deserving of the highest encomiums for the course she adopted. She always avoided him when a private interview was likely to ensue. Nor was it until the evening previous to the day on which he left us, that he had an opportunity of offering her his hand."

"Oh! oh! I see; that is it, is it? She deferred the meeting until the last moment, in order to make it look more romantic; his agitation of mind causes him to say more than he intended; the offer is at once seized upon; and, when reflection returns, he finds himself outwitted by a mere girl. Is it not so, Frank?"

"No, sir," replied Frank; "for though she loved me, her prudence and modesty forbade her giving the slightest indication of it; and her surprise equalled your own when I made known the extent of my

passion. She reasoned long and earnestly against an union so apparently unequal. That, being poor and friendless, unknown, and exiled from her native place, she was not a fit consort for one who was heir to a wealth so great that it alone might win him a bride from the ranks of the noble of our land. These arguments I overruled. I told her, that by me her amiable simplicity was more prized than fortune, or the pride of a high sounding name. Her last objection was, the grief it might occasion to yourself. But against this I pledged my word to gain your consent. I had consulted no one in the transaction; even Mr. Wynn was unacquainted with it until an accident revealed it to him, a few hours previous to my departure."

"Well, sir, and may I ask what advice you gave the lad?"

"I will tell you, Mr. Morland," said his friend. "At first I imagined it was

only a youthful passion, that would quickly pass away and be forgotten. But I soon found myself mistaken: and I knew sufficient of Maria St. Crost's disposition to make me fully confident that if her love was as strong as Frank's, nothing but death could again efface it. Constrained by this feeling, my counsel to your son, when I found the honourable nature of his attachment for Maria, was, to treasure up her image in his mind, to reflect upon her virtues, and to judge her by the standard of such of his countrywomen amongst whom he would be thrown in a foreign land. And that if, after this, he still thought an adherence to his pledge would advance her happiness as well as his own, then, from that hour, to consider her as his betrothed bride. I have never regretted the advice I then gave; having from the first had an almost paternal affection for her; and if

it had pleased God to bless me with a daughter, I should wish her to have been such an one as she.

“But why not have informed me of all this at the time?”

“I thought it possible, Mr. Morland, that Frank’s affection might abate when the object of it was removed so long from his sight; or some unforeseen event destroy the chance of our ever being able to consummate the hopes of the young people. I therefore took the same view of the case themselves had done. But if we had received, unmutilated, the letter Frank wrote whilst his thoughts wandered from a sick pillow, as he lay in a jungle forest of Hindostan, to the lowly cottage where he had left her he loved, but who was still unacknowledged, then, I conceive, you would have been made acquainted with the whole circumstance.”

“Yes,” replied Frank, “and in doing

this my purpose was to provide a home suitable for Maria."

"Of course you will be able to give me an outline of the sort of life she led before coming here. As you say she did not come from a workhouse, I should like to know, Mr. Wynn, where she did set out from."

"Finding from a conversation I had with Maria, a few days after your son's departure, that the subject of her former life was an unpleasant topic," replied the reverend gentleman, "I never questioned her upon it; and felt perfectly satisfied with having, as my only warranty, her amiable disposition and gentle manners. All that Frank knew, and all that I now know, is, that she is of gentle blood."

"The more I hear, the darker seems the mystery: it is certainly the strangest, the most foolish, yea, the maddest thing I ever heard of. Here is a young man,

who, as the girl herself acknowledges, is both handsome and rich enough to have obtained the hand of any lady in the country, 'falls in love with,' as he calls it, though I should rather say, is ensnared by one of his servants, a common factory girl, and as much beneath him in every respect as ——"

"However ungenerous it may appear to you, my dear father, for me to speak so strongly, I must say that I cannot, will not, allow Maria to be classed with the other girls in the mill. For I am convinced that when removed into a higher sphere, she will not dishonour the title of lady. In forming this opinion I have only her general carriage for my guide."

"There are two lines in Shakespeare, Frank, in the opening of one of his poems, I forget which; they run thus:

"When my love swears she's made of truth,
I do believe her though I know she lies."

"I have asserted that which I believe to be a fact," replied Frank, "though I have not her word for it. Indeed I am so fully persuaded of this, that your sanction to our love is the only thing wanting to complete our own and your happiness.

"Do not deceive yourself any longer by so flattering a hope. You may rest assured, sir, that I shall never grant it."

"Maria St. Crost shall be your daughter, my dear father; and, I may almost venture to say, not with your consent only, but even with your blessing. For I shall proceed at once to prove, that she is in every way as worthy of your esteem as of my love."

"A philosopher once proved to his disciples that he had discovered animals in the moon: I am afraid that, however clear it may appear to you that politeness is a natural, and not an acquired accomplish-

ment, your theory, like that taught by the sage, will not go beyond the school of your own brain. All I can say is, if you defer the completion of your foolish project till I am satisfied with it, there is little chance for the present of my Hall being graced by the presence of a daughter. But, my boy, mark my word; if you marry this factory girl, she and you will have to begin the world afresh. Do you understand me, sir?"

"I do; but am in no degree daunted?"

"Mr. Morland," said his friend, "will you allow me to say a few words on this subject before you decide upon adopting so rash a course as that of driving from your bosom the son so long mourned for and now so happily restored to you? And all for what? Because he has preferred that virtue rather than wealth should be his guide in the choice of a partner for life. Think not, sir, I should be arguing

thus, against the most valued friend I have, were I not convinced that that friend was unconsciously about to destroy his own happiness and the happiness of all that are nearest and dearest to him. That there is a mystery hanging over the affair I shall not deny; and it will give me as much pleasure to see it cleared up as it will to Frank himself."

"That mystery I have just solved for you," rejoined Mr. Morland. "I would lay a wager the girl thinks more about the gold than the man she expects will bring it. But she is doomed to be disappointed. Your marriage portion shall be double that of her own. For though she shall not marry for money, still she shall not have it in her power to complain."

"Reflect a moment, my friend," said Mr. Wynn, "upon what you are about to do; weighing the matter fairly in your

mind. But, whatever conclusion you may arrive at, I think it my duty to warn you, before it is too late, that though you have, by the laws of the land, a right to deprive your son of that which he has hitherto justly looked upon as eventually to be his own, still you have not the sanction of the moral law for it. Having educated him to fill a certain station in life, you ought not now to take away every means of supporting that rank, merely because the young man cannot yield to a demand as prejudiced as it is arbitrary. Under these circumstances you have not the power, I repeat, morally speaking, to do what you will with your own. For these arguments I have the authority of one of the most learned of our English divines, by whose opinion, sir, you would do well to be guided."

"And so, by this most orthodox doc-

trine, I am not only to allow my son to bring into my very Hall a trumpery girl out of the street, and to receive her with open arms, and that because he chooses, contrary to my express wish, to marry her, but I am also bound to make a handsome provision for them—divide my fortune with them, I suppose—and reenact the story of the prodigal son. When I took you, sir, to be my bosom friend, I did so under the impression that we should prove to each other mutually worthy of such a name. How I have been requited for my confidence, your own conscience shall be the judge between us. It is a vulgar error to imagine that wisdom is to be sought for beneath grey locks rather than darker ones; I would have you reflect upon this, sir."

"I shall not at present, Mr. Morland, reply to your charges; but, at some future

time, when a little consideration has shown you how hasty your conclusions, how unguarded your words have been,—then I hope the task will be an easy one.”

“For your sake, sir, I hope it may. To you, Frank, I have nothing more to say, —I can only repeat my former words: if you persist in this insane determination of ruining your prospects, I shall not relent one point from my first resolution.”

“I am truly sorry, my dear father, for your own peace of mind, that you have chosen to adopt this course; but when I have made good my words, I shall bring Maria, and with her kneel at your feet and ask a parent’s blessing.”

“Now that I know your final resolve, Frank, I shall be prepared to act. But lest you should change your opinion when too late, I shall give you a week to reconsider it. Until then, my son is in India.”

The presence of a footman, who entered to answer the bell, forbade any reply to Mr. Morland's last words.

"Show these gentlemen to the door," said he; and, without any parting salutation, left the room.

CHAPTER VI.

"There sat upon a linden tree
A bird, and sang its strain ;
So sweet it sang, that as I heard
My heart went back again.

"It went to *one* remember'd spot,
It saw the rose trees grow,
And thought again the thoughts of love,
There cherished long ago.

"A thousand years to me it seems,
Since by my fair I sat ;
Yet thus to be a stranger long,
Is not my choice but fate."

From the German of DIETMAR VON ASTE.

As Mr. Wynn and his young companion walked along in the darkness, no communications passed between them. Each, wrapped in deep thought, appeared as though unconscious of any presence except his own. The reverend gentleman was reviewing in his mind the past, both as to his own conduct in the affair, and

the evidence Maria had almost daily given of the truth of what he had that evening stated to his friend.

He felt convinced that, as far as human judgment can be allowed to sway our actions, he had performed to the best of his ability, that which a Christian and a man of honour ought. For if, on the contrary, he had at once informed Mr. Morland of all that had been entrusted to his secrecy, Frank would, probably, have relinquished his design of going to India, or at least deferred his departure for a time, and in either case must have incurred his father's displeasure, and that, too, without possessing the softening influence likely to flow from so happy a reunion as the present must eventually prove, to mitigate it : and thus, this estrangement, which he had no doubt would only be a temporary one, might very possibly have then terminated in an

irreparable breach. The love of the young people had not then, as now, been tried in the measure of adversity: for sickness and even despair will often add strength to man's short-lived passions. They might if united in the heat of anger, and without a sufficient knowledge of each other's temperament, have rendered themselves, as well as Mr. Morland, unhappy for the remaining portion of their lives. The peculiar circumstances under which he became the repository of the secret would, of themselves, have been sufficient to prevent him disclosing it. But still, after glancing thus hastily at these points, he felt that his position with regard to his friend might not bear the same features to the world as those he could so conscientiously put upon it himself. The persons most likely to criticize his conduct would not be in possession of the intricacies of the affair, or be influenced

in their judgment by the knowledge of Maria's good qualities. Their decision would, therefore, naturally be biassed by that which was most prominent, and if so, could not redound to his credit.

No angry thoughts entered his mind at the remembrance of the harsh language with which Mr. Morland had assailed him; judging it by what he supposed his own feelings must have been if placed in a similar situation. But these feelings brought before him the full conviction of the meanness of pride, and the littleness of human foresight when under its influence. There was, to all appearances, a happiness, such as few men are fated to enjoy in this life, now placed by Providence at the feet of his friend. His heart prompted him to seize upon it, when pride steps in between and whispers, "Your dignity will be sullied if you accept happiness on these terms; wretchedness without hope were

preferable to this." In the warmth of passion man's opinions too often concur with this baneful sentiment, and the proffered happiness is spurned. But, please God, cool reflection may come before it is too late. Such were the workings of the good man's mind.

Frank's reveries, on the other hand, were directed to Maria's recent afflictions; to what she must have said, have done; and, above all, what her thoughts had been when she supposed him untrue. Well might she receive him as her master only, and not with the joyous welcome that for months had been as a vision ever present to his waking hours. Her virtuous anger now made his heart the more glad; for nothing but a sense of injured innocence could have caused her to assume a look, a gesture so fraught with indignation.

Thus they proceeded on in silence, until

arriving at that part of the carriage road where the walk to the Parsonage branched off, when Frank, instead of taking this, mechanically advanced on the one leading to the high road. His companion caught him by the arm, asking where he was going. But instead of answering the interrogation, he spoke as though he addressed himself only: "How pale she looked; I must go and tell her I shall never leave her more."

"Not to-night," said his friend, who perceived that Frank, in his abstraction, was about to visit the Lodge; "come with me, and in the morning you shall meet Maria at the Parsonage. She promised that after your return she would make it her home."

Frank's heart beat high with a thankful joy when he heard these words: but it was only for a moment; a thought struck him, "You, my dear sir, will receive her

as your own daughter, but your lady; she ——”

“Knows all; and has wished long and ardently for your return, in order that she might take Maria from the mill?”

Frank's reception at the Parsonage was marked by a coldness that even surpassed indifference. Mr. Wynn's lady was imbued with a high notion of the honour that ought to guide us in all the transactions of life. But in the present affair this feeling, since she became more thoroughly acquainted with Maria, had gradually led her to regard Frank with thoughts not only of resentment but of shame. But when the reverend gentleman related what had passed between Mr. Morland and his son; no greeting could be more affectionate or sincere than that she gave to the returned wanderer.

The remainder of the evening was spent in conversing about Maria, Frank

inquiring into every minute point: both what she had said when the fatal letter was shown her, and how she had borne the news, received as it was in a form so unexpected. Thus they prolonged the discourse until the midnight hour warned them to retire to rest.

More startling events for Frank had been crowded into a few hours than all that occurred for many long months before.

The thoughts of these, as he lay on his couch, passed rapidly through his mind, swift as the storm-impelled waves of the ocean follow each other—so quick their succession; his father's displeasure, Maria's pure and constant love, and the happiness of possessing such friends as his host and hostess. Soon after daybreak he arose and descended on to the lawn, where he was shortly after joined by Mr. Wynn, who was on his way to the Lodge

to inform Maria of that which had taken place, and to conduct her to her new home. At his particular request Frank remained at the Parsonage, whilst he proceeded alone.

Upon arriving at the cottage he found the outer door open, and, with a noiseless step, entered. The scene he beheld both grieved and pleased him; though a stranger might have imagined it was one from which nothing but sorrow could be gathered. Maria, whose tears flowed fast, held Dame Hargreaves with clasped hands, as if to detain her; but it was evident that restraint was unnecessary, for the captive neither spoke nor moved. Standing by was the old man; his countenance bearing the marks of some uncommon emotion. "Thoust neer leave us, wench; they may turn us aw ate together afore weal part wi thee," sobbed forth the dame.

Maria flew to meet Mr. Wynn, who embraced her as a father. Hargreaves at the same moment put a note into his hand. "If God had taen her," said he, "I should a thout 'His will be done;' but when a man tries to do it, it's more tell we con bear."

The note was addressed to Hargreaves, and ran as follows:—

"A young woman named Maria St. Crost, is now harbouring at my Lodge. I command you to send her away immediately; and to see that she, and everything belonging to her, are removed from the village without delay. I have given instructions to your son, not to allow her to enter the mill again. The boy, her brother, may remain with you until he can be removed without danger.

"H. M."

"Maria," said the reverend gentleman,

after perusing Mr. Morland's note, "you must go to the Parsonage; you will then be amongst friends, and at the same time near your brother."

"Not so, sir," replied she; "my evil fortune would follow me there; I should only bring disgrace upon your pure and happy home; and so add one more remorse to the many I already suffer, for being the cause of introducing dissension and misery into the cottage, as well as the hall. Frank ought not to love one who is bringing him to poverty. I shall implore him, for his own, for his father's sake, to let me hide myself in some secluded spot; where, can I only retain your esteem, sir, I shall be, if not happy, at least resigned."

"You must not leave us, my dear girl," said Mr. Wynn. "Frank Morland prizes your love above gold, or all that gold can give. He is willing to sacrifice

all, yea, has already given up everything for it. And now it only remains for you to let the future prove, that he, that I, that these good people here, have not been beguiled, as some would have it, by the world's cunning; but that we have loved and respected, the gentle, the amiable Maria St. Crost, because she was, and is, what she always appeared to be."

"Oh, never may it be said that I have been false; you shall be my guide, sir; I will go willingly wherever you lead me; but Edwin——"

"Leave him, for the present, to me; I will see that he does not want anything."

"But, sir, your not agoin tak her away, are you?" interrupted the old man; "hoo's neer done nout, as ever I knowed, as hoo need be shamed on, has hoo?"

"Far from it. But it is necessary for

us all, that you should separate for a few days."

Maria threw her arms round Hargreaves' neck. "Frank Morland is come home, and loves me; and they tell him I am not worthy of him."

"Th young mesther come home! and wants to wed you! Who says your no worthy on him? It's somebody as does not know yo. Yole tak him summot better worth havin tell silver. But this is no place for you now; though may be yole think of the owd wife an me na un then?"

"I shall never, never forget you, but come and see you every day. You must take care of Edwin."

"Aye, lass, he'st not want out, as Mr. Wynn says, if it wur but for yore sake," replied the dame.

Frank had been in a state of great perturbation at the protracted absence of

his friend. He was in dread lest something unpleasant had occurred at the Lodge; nor were his fears calmed until Mr. Wynn returned, leading by the hand the lovely stranger. As he placed the hands of the young couple in each other, he exclaimed with fervour, "May God bless you, and make you both happy."

Maria was pale as death; and so strong was her lover's emotion, that he seemed not to possess the strength of an infant. "Nought but death shall again part us," said he, as he embraced her. This was too affecting to be long endured. Mr. Wynn led Maria away to his lady, who, by offering the consolation which she knew so well how to bestow, soon restored the poor girl to her wonted composure.

It had been arranged that after breakfast Frank should relate his adventures. And with Maria seated by his side, he commenced his narration as follows:—

“ After calling at the Lodge on the morning of my departure, I proceeded at once to Southampton, and left England the following evening. The noble steamer glided swiftly through the Southampton water, bearing in its gorgeous saloons no heart more light than mine; nor any, among its numerous passengers, whose hopes and visions of future happiness were more strongly or more surely pictured than were mine. A strange sort of joyous feeling possessed me when I remembered that the narration of all I saw, and even all I thought, whilst absent, might one day afford pleasure to those from whom I had just parted. This was a feeling which none can enjoy but those who are separated, as they fondly think, for a short time only, from kinsmen or friends dear to them as life itself: the pleasure of looking forward to a happy reunion is an unspeakable one. I was,

consequently, not a melancholy member of the merry company; who, many of them, left home and all its endearments, perhaps, for ever; certainly few with the prospect of so speedy a return as myself. We had on board a mixed, but pleasant party; nobles and commoners. The peer and the merchant lowered or raised themselves to one level; and our little world assumed, for a brief space, the reality of an Utopia, so long known to many of us a dream only. I shall pass over in silence the incidents of the voyage, and of our flight through Lower Egypt, and also my residence at Bombay; leaving the narrative of them to enliven our winter evenings, when assembled in my father's hall."

"May God of his goodness grant it," remarked Mr. Wynn.

"It was towards the close of November, when, having almost completed my busi-

ness affairs, the idea of travelling homewards to Bombay overland,—I was then at Calcutta,—first suggested itself to my mind. I had seen but little of India,—nothing, in fact, except part of the coast, and some portion of the British Presidencies. I felt reluctant to leave one of the most interesting countries on the globe without becoming a little more acquainted with it; and, when once imbued with this notion, no great amount of self-persuasion was required to cause me at once to fix upon the route I had named. I consulted my friends, however, first; though, I must confess, more out of compliment than with any intention of being guided by their opinions. Many attempted to dissuade me, pointing out the numerous risks to be incurred in so long a journey, by one not sufficiently inured to the climate. But their sage counsel was not so acceptable as the en-

couragement I received from a young captain, who was on the point of setting out to join his regiment at Delhi. His arguments decided the matter. Not many days had elapsed after my final arrangement, when, being one evening at a ball, my friend the captain informed me he had been most fortunate in having obtained an addition to our party. These were a colonel in the East India Company's service and his daughter, together with two officers and a civilian. Colonel Gray was proceeding to the seat of war, intending to leave his daughter at Delhi; of the others I need not speak. The Grays being in the room at the time, my companion offered to introduce me to them. 'But,' said he, 'let me caution you, if you value the possession of your heart, not to look too ardently upon the young lady,—at least not until your eyes become in some degree familiar with her

features. If you do, I shall not be answerable for the consequences.' I laughed at this advice, and followed him through the room towards a small group who were standing apart from the throng. 'The lady in white,' remarked my conductor, 'is Maranda Gray.' She was in an animated conversation with a gentleman; and, as her countenance was directed towards him, it was not until she turned to receive my companion's salutation that I became aware of her irresistible beauty. I would it were possible for me to sink in Lethe's stream the thoughts and actions of two at least of the following months. This I have endeavoured to do, but in vain; for, like some unrepented of crime, they are ever present to my sleeping, as well as my waking thoughts; and never, until I have been shriven by you, my loved one, to whose ear I mean to lay

bare all my sins, never till then shall I dare to think myself forgiven."

"But that you already are," rejoined his lovely confessor; "for if my Frank is truly penitent, I shall ever think of the past as one does of a dream."

"Maria, my girl," said Mr. Wynn, with a smile of pleasure, "you will make too lenient a father, if you grant absolution before hearing the confession; a good Catholic would have mentioned penances; or, at least, have named sums by which such and such sins could be remitted."

"Oh, sir, you forget. Frank is already undergoing the penance of loving me."

"And from which he will never be absolved," replied Frank. "But, now that I am forgiven, I shall be able to relate the sequel as though it had passed, as Maria says, in a dream only, and so shall proceed at once. I was captivated by

Miss Gray's elegant style of beauty, and dazzled by the brilliant flashes of her wit. But as well might it be imagined, that a serpent is revered by the bird it charms, as that a single spark of love ever formed a part of the passion I felt for Maranda Gray. I had been as a lone wanderer, long contemplating a star that appeared to me the most lovely of all the sparkling throng; when suddenly a meteor dashes across the heavens, and the whole is illuminated by its intense glare, a brilliancy which blinds the beholder. When my vision is restored, I look around, but the meteor has already disappeared,—vanished as quickly as it came. Not so the star; it is still there, shining down upon me from its lofty throne with a gentle undiminished light that reproaches my weakness."

"Say not reproaches, Frank," replied

Maria; "it may only be the morning star, that is guiding in the day."

"Fit harbinger of such a happy dawn as this, the breaking of which I have so often despaired of. Well; after about a month's preparation, we left Calcutta with a fleet consisting of three boats, each pulling sixteen oars, manned by twenty natives; and, in addition to these, there were the attendants' and cooking boats. Our party had been again increased by a number of friends, among whom were two young ladies about Maranda's age; these persons were going into the country on business, or in quest of pleasure, and together we formed a goodly company. The tediousness of ascending the river was enlivened by the boisterous mirth and the hilarity of our spirits upon being released from the hot streets of Calcutta. No one was merrier

than Maranda; wheresoever her graceful form was seen, there might also be heard the sounds of gaiety. She was named the Queen of the party, and had homage paid to her accordingly. When any had a petition to ask, he had the privilege of kissing hands. This brought numerous suppliants to the foot of the throne; and among them, very frequently myself. A sort of madness appeared to possess me. My vivacity had obtained for me the office of Master of the Revels; and although it seemed the perfection of happiness, I was never more truly miserable. Upon reaching Allahabad, we found a convoy, with military stores, awaiting the arrival of Colonel Gray, and with which he was to proceed up the river. As this would cause our progress to be very slow, it was agreed upon by a few of the party to abandon the boats, and, leaving the river, advance westward

as far as time would allow, and so join our friends again, either at Agra or Delhi. Maranda was an excellent horse-woman, and it required little persuasion to induce her and her youthful female companions to join us. This would appear to an English lady, who had not been out of her own country, a breach of female delicacy and decorum ; but in India these things are not outwardly observed with the same strictness as at home : we were beyond the bounds of etiquette ; and, as we galloped over the plateau of Malwa, we lived only for the hour, and cared not for the morrow. On the evening of the tenth day after our departure from Allahabad, we found our tents pitched amongst the ruins of what had once been a large town,—the wars of the native princes having, many years before, devastated that part of the country. The transactions of that evening are more

strongly impressed on my memory than any other events of my life, with one single exception. The moon was at full, and shone, not as she shines to the inhabitants of northernly climes, but with a light the very atmosphere of love. I had wandered with our fair companion through the ruins; and as we discoursed about the scene and of the wreck that lay around us, our thoughts were gradually drawn into a more solemn strain than we had ever before used. Maranda never appeared so charming as at that moment. She was reclining on the square shaft of a fallen column, and listening, apparently, with an eager attention to my conversation. A loud laugh, however, which the stillness of the night bore along to us from the tents, dispelled the grave thoughts of my companion. 'We can hear owls hoot among ruins at home, without coming to India to listen to them,' said she, and,

with that, bounded off to join the giddy pleasures of the rest of the party. Never, during my whole life, have I formed a durable friendship with any one who could not devote an occasional hour to something more worthy of our nature than mere worldly pleasure or idle conversation. The constant thirst after gaiety shown by Maranda Gray had not until then struck me in its full truth. Lost in reflections like these, I remained seated on the same spot till sleep overpowered me; and in this state was found by my faithful Abdullah. This man, formerly a Mussulman, had become a convert to Christianity, and a more faithful servant man never had. Feeling unwell, I retired to rest, and from that time I have not seen my companions. Twelve days elapsed from the evening I last mentioned before I became conscious of what had passed. A fever, accompanied by

occasional fits of delirium, deprived me of the powers of reason; when that, however, returned, I found myself in a ruined tomb, and attended only by Abdullah and a venerable old man, who I afterwards discovered to be a Parsee. He had the mildest and most benign expression of countenance I ever remember to have seen; his smile it was first greeted my returning consciousness. But when I endeavoured to speak, he placed his finger on my lips and shook his head, frowning at the same time; thus intimating that I must be silent. In this state I continued a couple of weeks, hanging between life and death, not having the power to speak, and scarcely even to think; for memory itself seemed to be overcome by the force of the disease, until one morning,—I well remember it, for though the tomb was in the deep shade of a jungle, and surrounded by trees of immense height, still the

powerful rays of the sun had penetrated the leafy cloud, and driven, not only animals, but even the very insects to seek coolness by a cessation from action,—as my eye wandered along the margin of a pool near to the spot where we were, it rested, not with the vacant gaze it had so long assumed, but with a steadfast look, upon a pair of birds, which I afterwards discovered to be Indian bulbuls. The plumage of these birds is very elegant, the head and neck are white, the back intermediate feathers on the tail yellow, terminating in brilliant blue; the wings white and ultramarine blue, the quills of them, as of the tail, being tipped with black. One of the birds seemed as though it had just escaped from the talons of some bird of prey; with his head almost buried in his ruffled feathers, he presented a most melancholy appearance. The other, on the contrary, sat pluming her wings,

and often stretched out her neck, as if elate with pride, and never deigned to notice her mate. Presently, when the air became a little cooler, a flock of bulbuls settled on the boughs of an adjoining tree. No sooner did the hale bird hear their chattering, than, with a cry of delight, she flew to join them, without giving even a farewell peck at her forlorn companion. During the time I had been watching the birds, I was alone; and, when Abdullah came to me I addressed him, asking what had become of my friends? Instead of answering me, however, he ran off at full speed and shortly returned, accompanied by the Parsee. I repeated my question, when my servant, who speaks English well, said, that they had left the same morning I was taken ill; but that, being yet in great danger, I was not to speak. But if not allowed to utter words, my thoughts I could not restrain. I had

been left then in the jungle to die like a dog, or be devoured by beasts of prey. This led me to think of the poor deserted bird; I pointed to it, showing, as well as I could, that I wished to have it. Abdullah ran and brought it to me, and sprinkling a little water upon it, revived it. He set to work the same day and constructed a wicker cage, in which he placed it, and hung it outside the tomb, in order that I might amuse myself by watching its motions. One day my attention was attracted by the plaintive notes of a bird that had settled immediately over our little captive's prison house. At first I thought it was the same that had left its mate a few days before; but I soon found it was another bird. Abdullah opened the door of the cage, when the stranger sailed round two or three times, as if to prolong her joy. After a little while she flew away, but presently

returned with some food in her bill. What can this mean? thought I; this second bird is my own Maria, forgotten, but still true. Oh that I should, not for a moment only, but for weeks, yea, months, have ceased to remember that it was for her I had vowed to live, and die if needs were. But do not weep, Maria. The more intense the pain is, so much the greater will be the pleasure, when health is restored. I resolved to atone for my neglect by writing, when able, to my father, and inform him of my love.

“The next day Abdullah related what had passed since he found me asleep among the ruins; how my companions, upon finding that I could not be moved, had left me; taking along with them both my servants and baggage, himself alone remaining behind with two horses. All the instructions left were that as they should proceed slowly we might follow,

and so overtake them during the day. But the part of the story that galled the most was that in which he related the behaviour of my fair countrywoman; how she joined in the merriment, when it was said, 'that I deserved what I had got for attempting more than a griffin ought to accomplish.' For though I was a griffin then, I was not one when I left India. My servant had a slight knowledge of the manner of treating the diseases of the country, and never left me during the day. Evening had no sooner cast its shades over the ruins than a band of Pindaries surrounded the small tent where I lay; springing up on all sides, said Abdullah, as though the former inhabitants of the place had arisen from the dead to revenge upon us their massacre. No jackal scents his prey so far as the Indian robber his victim; and few are they who escape from him with their

lives. They took from us everything except the clothes we had on, and these the fever preserved to us, Abdullah having feigned likewise to be ill, and my purse, containing a few rupees, which he contrived to hide in the earth: death, they imagined, was so certain that they did not give themselves the trouble to hasten it. The next morning Abdullah met with the Parsee, who took me under his care; removing me to the ruined tomb in the jungle forest: and there, attended almost daily by my kind friend, I had remained up to that time without molestation. Having found a piece of paper in my pocket-book, I wrote with great difficulty those few unfortunate lines; happy had it been if I had never done so. This was sent to the nearest station. But the exertion proved unfavourable to my recovery; and my physician informed me that only one chance now remained by which my life

could be saved, and this was by being conveyed as rapidly as possible to some sea port, from whence I could leave the country without delay. Accordingly Abdullah constructed a palanquin out of the stems and leafy branches of young trees. The little money my purse contained was sufficient for the hire of eight bearers; but if any was reserved to remunerate the boatmen on the river, I should then have nothing left except thanks for the preserver of my life. He frankly assured me that if I had been possessed of as much wealth as Runjeet Singh, he would not have touched a single rupee. We were in motion a few hours only in the morning and the same at evening, for we rested during the heat of the day. The constant change of scene, and this easy mode of travelling had a beneficial effect on the state of my health. Our course was directed to the river Nerbudalla: intend-

ing to drop down that stream to the sea; and so proceed to Bombay. Soon after we arrived on its banks, we espied one of the flatbottomed boats, with the large lateen sails peculiar to this part of India, shooting rapidly down the stream. A few bales of cotton, along with other merchandise, formed a portion of the freight. With these they contrived to build a sort of hut, in which I was laid. The excessive heat of the sun, together with the malaria it drew up from the marshy banks of the river caused a recurrence of the fever: and before we arrived at the sea I was again in a state of insensibility. To the faithful attachment of my servant, once more, was I indebted for my life. He afterwards informed me, that upon reaching Broach I was removed into a boat just then starting for Bombay. After a tedious passage of several days duration they sighted the light at the

entrance of Bombay harbour, where they lay-to for the night. At the break of day they perceived, a few cables length off, a large ship under English colours; and displaying the blue flag at her mast-head. Abdullah thought this was an opportunity he must not let pass, and accordingly boarded her at once. Seeing an officer of the ship pacing the quarter-deck, he accosted him, saying he had an English gentleman in the boat that lay a short distance astern, whose life could be saved only by his being taken out to sea immediately. He then in a few words related my recent adventures and misfortunes, concluding by an earnest appeal to him to have compassion on his sick countryman. Such a request is seldom made to a British sailor in vain; nor was it then. For, regardless of the danger, he commanded a boat to be lowered, and the Englishman fetched on board. By the time this was done the

anchor was weighed, and the ship had started on her homeward course. The fever had now gained such strength that the issue of the struggle was for a long time very doubtful. But in the end medical skill and the refreshing sea air prevailed. Oh! the joy at finding myself on shipboard, and once more surrounded by my countrymen; it repaid me for weeks of suffering. If the vessel had been my own I could not have received greater attention than was bestowed upon me. The Captain, it was he whom Abdullah had first addressed, took great interest in my fate. The name of this generous man is Captain Hardy; and a — But why do you sigh, Maria: my narrative grows tedious!"

"Not so, Frank," replied she, "I could listen to you through an age. But my father had a friend once of that name; and though he perished at sea, his memory

is still dearly cherished by those who knew him. But, pray proceed."

"Captain Hardy is a brave and noble fellow. The narration of some of his numerous adventures caused the hours to pass rapidly away. Many years ago he had commanded a vessel engaged in the China trade; had been attacked in the Indian seas by pirates, natives of Borneo: they enclosed the ship during a calm night in a fleet of prahus. He and his crew fought long and valiantly; but in the end the pirates, who were several hundreds strong, obtained the victory. Those of his men who had not fallen in the affray, were bound together in couples and thrown into the sea, himself only being saved: this being done through the hope that at some future time they might obtain a ransom for him: they then took what was most valuable out of the ship, and after scuttling her escaped in their

prahus, taking Captain Hardy along with them. They carried him to one of their villages, or rather towns, for they are fortified with stockades: here he remained in a state of slavery until the horde, by whom he was detained captive, was extirpated by Rajah Brook in one of his recent expeditions against the piratical tribes that infest the coasts of Borneo."

"How long was Captain Hardy amongst those savages?" asked Maria, in a voice faltering with emotion; whilst her anxious look betrayed the intense interest with which she waited Frank's reply.

"He left England in the autumn of 1840: consequently it would be early in the following year when he lost his ship. Upon recovering his liberty he went to Bombay, where his talents as a seaman were well known and appreciated, and obtained the command of the ship 'Malabar,' in which

he was returning home, when we had the good fortune to meet with him."

"His name is Christopher Hardy? and his ship was called the 'Edith.'"

"You are right; it is he."

"And he is in England; and I shall see him, speak to him, tell him of all the wrongs, all the indignities, we have suffered! This is, indeed, more than I had dared to hope for; far more than I deserved to enjoy. It is he who was my father's friend, and is now the guardian of his children. Now I may relate every incident of my life. And as you have all loved me whilst poor, and possessing nothing but a name, I do not think but that you will still continue to love me when you know all."

Maria's tears of gratitude and her blushes told the way in which her passionate appeal had been received.

"But why withhold this from us so long, my dear girl?" said Mr. Wynn.

"Oh, sir! we were bound to secrecy by a vow and a threat; both too terrible to think of. But we are now acquitted from the one and need not fear the other. When Frank has concluded his narrative I will relate to you the history of my life."

"Then," replied Frank, "I shall not keep my friends long from that which will be so pleasing to them. As my strength returned, and I was able to take a little exercise on deck, Captain Hardy was my constant companion. Many a time during our conversation the name of Maria St. Crost was on my lips. Then I would remember that he, a stranger, could take no interest in our loves, and so never mentioned the subject. We had a prosperous voyage until doubling the Cape of Good Hope, when we encountered very bois-

terous weather. The gale continued ten days, and drove us out of our course as far as the Island of Tristan d'Acunha. We lay a few days under its lee, repairing damages and taking in water. An old man and his descendants to the third generation are the only inhabitants of the island. The governor, as the patriarch styles himself, visited the ship each day, paying us every attention. From this place we had a fair run, and made the English coast three days ago."

"Well, Frank, and what were your sensations upon first seeing the white cliffs of old England again?" asked Mr. Wynn.

"Why, sir, they were not so poetical as many we read of. The day on which we should have sighted land, a thick fog came on, and the Captain lay-to for the night, much to the vexation of all on board. Yesterday the dawn had not begun to show, when, as I lay awake,

I heard the mate of the watch telling Captain Hardy that a pilot boat was just astern of us. The thought struck me, I might go on shore in her. In a few moments I was on deck. The men demurred at first, but we soon made all right; and after giving a few instructions to Abdullah, I descended the side of the good ship 'Malabar,' a very different man from when hauled up in Bombay harbour. The morning was thick and murky, so that for the first glimpse I got of my native land, I was indebted to the gas-lamps of Dover. Being on shore in time for an early train to London, it enabled me to arrive here last evening. Whilst gliding along, rolling swiftly over the ground, as though borne through the air on eagles' pinions, the thoughts of home and friends were frequently banished from my mind by an indescribable fear, a fever of anxiety, lest any ill should have

befallen her whose image was ever present to my mind. This dread increased as I approached the spot where my fate would be revealed, and the future happiness or misery of my life decided. I arrived at the Lodge; every thing about it wore the same peaceful aspect as when I left, myself alone seemed changed. Pausing at the wicket, nothing could be heard except the low sweet sound of a female voice reading a portion of Scripture. It was she; it was my own Maria! Oh, the joy of those moments! I entered with noiseless tread, and listened until she ceased. In the room where I had parted from Maria, I found her on my return. She was leaning over a bed of sickness, and so absorbed in contemplating the pale countenance of her brother—for I perceived it was he—that I hung over her before she became aware of my presence. You may imagine, but I hope

will never realize such dismay, or as I should rather term it, horror, as seized upon me, when, instead of being received with joy, Maria shrank from me as if some base libertine had approached her. Never was the triumph of virtue over sordid and worldly passions more nobly won. It proved that, however fickle had been my love, hers was fixed and unchangeable; for even desertion itself had not obliterated it. With the rest you are acquainted; so I must now cease, and in turn become an eager listener."

"But you have not told us what became of the birds," said the old lady.

"My servant, as I said," rejoined Frank, "constructed a cage for the wounded one. But it drooped when its free companion was absent; so Abdullah caught it and placed them both together; and perceiving the pleasure they afforded me, he brought them with him. Their play-

fulness and the attachment they evinced for each other, were the amusement and delight of all on board."

Frank, accompanied by Mr. Kenworthy, left for London the same evening. His sudden departure was caused by the purport of Maria's story, and the wish all felt for reconciliation with Mr. Morland.

CHAPTER VII.

"A lady came and thus bespake me: 'I

Am Lucia.'——

—— Like one, whose doubts
Are chased by certainty, and terror turned
To comfort on discovery of the truth,—
Such was the change in me."

DANTE.

THE news of Frank's return spread rapidly through the village; so much so, indeed, that by breakfast-time on the following morning, not this alone, but an exaggerated account of the scene that had taken place at the Hall, were already become the sole topics of conversation. A large amount of scandal, added in the course of the day, increased the interest of the story. One version of the affair was that Frank had eloped with Maria, whilst

another stated that they had been privately married at the Parsonage. All the old gossips of the village called at the Lodge; but Dame Hargreaves, well aware that their object was curiosity and not sympathy, resolved not to gratify them; and therefore pleaded ignorance. Certain it was that Maria was gone, and Frank had not been seen during the day. This gave great probability to the first, or runaway story, which before night was universally believed.

The surprise created among Mr. Morland's workpeople, at the sudden reappearance of their young master, was not greater than that caused by the mystery of Maria's conduct. Her life having, hitherto, been so spotless, as to silence the tongue of the envious, as well as the dissolute. But for these, this was the hour of triumph; and with what zest do the giddy and loose, not only of the

gay and educated throng, but also of the poor and illiterate, seize upon that which may appear a good opportunity to lower the object of their envy to a level with themselves. In Maria's case this spirit of revenge, which her noble example of how virtuous a life it is possible, for those who wish it, to lead even in a cotton mill, had festered in many a female breast, and now broke forth without restraint; Mr. Morland's temper in the matter being easily discernible.

All her amiable qualities were set down as affectation, and her religion as hypocrisy. Even Mr. Wynn came in for no small share of abuse, as the narration of the following remarks that passed between two young women who had been Maria's fellow-workers will testify.

"Well, an what dun yo think abate Ria at th Lodge na? Ha toud yo afore ever he went off, as hur an't yung mes-

thur wur thick, but yo nobbut louft at me."

"Why," rejoined her companion, "ha should neer ho thout has hood ah had so mitch gaume abate hur, for't a done what hoo has done. An then tha sees, firt cap aw, hoos gone an humbugged th parson. Ha what a —— hoo must be."

"But they sen as hees not bin jannock nother," said the former speaker; "for he knowed awe abate it lung anoof, un neer tow'd noboddy. But hees mistan we hur I'le be. Hool cuss as hard as onny on us when hoo comes tur wark again."

Though sentiments similar to these were joined in by many, still there were some, and they more numerous than might have been expected, who took another view of the affair. To these Maria had ever been a model of all that was good or true; and therefore they

were not precipitate in their judgment. Nevertheless the unravelling of the mystery was looked forward to by every one with constantly increasing impatience.

Mr. Morland's passion abated nought of its violence when, by the departure of Frank and his reverend friend, he was left alone. He thought not then of the months of misery through which he had just passed, nor of the happiness he might have been enjoying in the sweet communion with his long lost son. The subject that entirely engrossed his mind was the degradation about to be brought upon him by that son. In this irritated spirit he issued the order for Maria's removal from the Lodge, and her dismissal from the mill. The whole of the following day was spent in a state of great anxiety of mind. Frank would be sure to tender his submission before its close. "But," thought he, "I shall make it a stipulation

with him, that the name of this girl must not again pass his lips, and then I can embrace him as my son." These pleasing anticipations of a speedy reconciliation served to while away the day. But as the "swift winged hours" glided by, and the sun disappeared behind the western hills, without his eyes being gladdened by the approach of the penitent, a few misgivings crossed his mind. "He will come to-morrow." But the morrow came without Frank's advent, or any tidings of him. "Surely he is not so mad as to act counter to my wish; no, he cannot—he dare not do it!" The thought was too absurd to entertain for a moment. But on the third day the thought was entertained; and the mere possibility of it caused the passion, which had in some degree lulled, to again fill his mind. Nor could he rest until he had sent for the younger Hargreaves, to learn from him

if anything was known. His worst fears were confirmed. The girl was gone,—no one knew where; and the very day after Frank's return, he and another gentleman were seen to leave the town by one of the railways. No doubt need now be entertained: his son had taken the fatal step; and nothing remained to complete the drama, but the carrying out the threat of disinheriting him. "I know the worst," said he, "and shall be happier when that is done than I was a week ago."

He ordered his carriage at once, and drove to his solicitor's. Inquiring from one of the clerks if Mr. Kenworthy was in his private office, he was informed that he left home in company with Mr. Frank Morland,—did not say where he was going, nor when he should be back.

"Verily," exclaimed Mr. Morland, in the bitterness of his anguish, "this is the unkindest cut of all. The oldest and

the best loved friends I had in the world are become the advisers of my son in his rebellion against me. Shakspeare, thou saidst the truth, though it is gall to human nature, when thou saidst, 'Most friendship is feigning.' I can go still further than thou, and say all love is mere folly. But let them go, it will teach me not to rely upon friendship for happiness."

These reflections were philosophical, and might suit the creed of a hater of everything and everybody; of one who is glad of an excuse to revile his fellow-mortals, if only out of principle. But they were contrary to the nature of such a man as Mr. Morland, whose heart, in the midst of its haughtiness, yearned to be with his son. He would make one more effort to save him; "for," he reflected, "it was an awful thing to cast a son, and he an only one, into the world,

if not with a father's curse upon, still without a father's blessing. And if he did not succeed, then—yes, and what then?"—He shuddered at the thought.

There was only one man from whom he could hope to receive assistance; and that man he had branded with the appellation of "deceitful." Nevertheless, as great emergencies demand great sacrifices, he would even apologize for his language, if, haply, by so doing, a door might be opened for his son's escape. Accordingly, on the seventh day since Frank's return, Mr. Morland walked over to the Parsonage. "How humiliating is my position," thought he, "to be thus compelled to seek the aid of the very man who has been a chief instrument in my chastisement. But I believe him to be sincere, and that he only wants convincing of his error to become as powerful an advocate in the cause of reason as he now is in that

of youthful rashness." Musing thus, he arrived at the house. Both the reverend gentleman and his lady were absent, but their return being momentarily expected, Mr. Morland resolved to await it.

Upon entering a room into which he was shown, he unexpectedly found it tenanted, a young lady, to his no small astonishment, being seated at a small work-table, near the window. If Mr. Morland had suddenly been transported into the realms of Fairy-land, his surprise could not have been greater. He entered, unannounced, and his presence not being noticed, he felt a little embarrassed. This momentary pause, however, gave him time to contemplate the countenance and general mien of his companion; she was, apparently, little more than twenty years of age; her slender, graceful form offering a marked contrast to the stiff and clumsily constructed oak chair, a chair of

olden days, in which she was seated. Her dress, of self coloured silk, was fashioned with an almost studied neatness, and relieved by a small snowy collar, that appeared all the whiter from its close proximity to her jet black hair, which was neatly folded behind the ear, and then enthralled in unwilling bands; a single glossy ringlet had, however, escaped from the fillet and lay upon her shoulder, as though too proud to be restrained, conscious of its power to captivate. A painter would, perhaps, have pronounced the countenance to be a little too pale; but her deep abstraction of mind might in some degree account for this; for though her lustrous eyes, shaded by their long lashes, rested on a book that lay open in her lap, yet neither it, nor the needlework she held in her small delicate hand, were in possession of her thoughts; they had taken flight to other objects, and

scenes far distant. The lattice window was open, and from it, if there was not an extensive view, there was at least a pleasing one—the sloping ground—the sheet of water, terminating at the trees around the old Hall—and just appearing over the tops of these, was the now black ridge of the heather clad hills. The morning was one of those few mild balmy ones with which November, at its commencement, sometimes gladdens the inhabitants of Lancashire. A monthly rose clambered around the window, the blooms of which, destined to be soon withered by the damp and frost, had turned their fragrant heads towards the room, as though contending for beauty's palm with the lovely flower within. But the contention was needless; for an opening bud, with which was joined a sprig of jessamine, placed on the work-table, proved how abortive was the at-

tempt. Mr. Morland had noticed all this; and wishing to be acquainted with the lovely being in whose company fortune had placed him, he advanced up the room, and broke in upon her reverie.

The sensations experienced by a dove when conscious that a bird of prey is hovering over her, might not inaptly be compared to those felt by the young lady, when her wandering spirit was brought back to its lovely tenement by Mr. Morland's voice. "Both Mr. Wynn and his lady are absent at present, I think, madam, are they not?" said he, bowing.

As she returned his salutation her strength fled, scarcely allowing her to regain, without stumbling, the seat from which she had risen.

Mr. Morland attributed her emotion to the abruptness of his introduction, and therefore relieved her by making a few casual observations; concluding by a re-

mark that, perhaps, his friends would not be long absent.

His kind tone of voice at once restored her presence of mind. "Oh no, sir," said she; "they are only gone to the Lodge, to pay a morning visit to my —— to the poor boy that was hurt at the mill." But why that slight blush, that hesitation? They tell of something concealed, either through fear or modesty; at least so thought Mr. Morland.

"My young *protégé*, you would, I think, have said, madam? I have then the honour of addressing the young lady who has been so attentive to the brother of that wretched girl, Maria St. Crost, with whose history you will, doubtless, ere this, have been made acquainted?"

"I have been frequently at the Lodge, sir, and have heard the story you speak of; but cannot help thinking that some

malicious slanderer has misrepresented her conduct."

"How that could be done, madam, I cannot easily imagine. To slander a person is to injure his or her character; but this girl has shown by the way in which she acted, that the loss of reputation is of no moment to her, so she attained the end she had in view."

"If nothing but what is vile and disreputable were to be found in the behaviour of Maria, or if she did not possess one redeeming quality, then why has Mr. Frank Morland become attached to her? Oh, sir, if this had been so, you know full well he could not have done it; no, he could not."

Frank's sweet pleader had forgotten to whom she was addressing herself until she ceased speaking, when a blush mantled her fair cheeks.

"That, madam," rejoined Mr. Morland,

“ is easily accounted for by any one at all versed in the ‘ world’s false forgeries ;’ but he is youthful, ardent, and inexperienced in the many ways adopted by cunning females, to entrap young men of fortune into marriage. They become suddenly enamoured with a pretty face, and are at once ready to sacrifice their own honour and the happiness of parents and friends, for mere sensual gratifications ; embittering a life for the pleasure of a moment.”

“ But, sir,” replied his companion, “ this was an attachment formed before Mr. Frank left England ; and, therefore, as it has stood the test of almost years of separation, may we not hope that something more than the pleasure of the moment induces him to risk a parent’s anger.”

“ Your reasoning, madam, springs from a motive similar to that which led the gazelle to intercede with Jove not to

punish the leopard for stealing her fawn, for she innocently believed him when he told her that he did it because his fur would make a much warmer and softer bed than the smooth coat of its dam. If you knew the anguish it has cost me, the days and nights of wretchedness that I have passed through, you could not defend such heartless, selfish conduct. She has caused the grief for a lost son to be doubly bitter, for he is now worse than lost to me; nor did she stop there, but deprived me with the same stroke of the society of a man whose friendship I valued more than all the other gifts Providence has bestowed upon me."

After a few moments pause, the fair appellant raised her eyes, now moist with tears, to meet Mr. Morland's gaze; for his last words, by the bitterness of their expression, told they came from a heart that had tasted of grief; and the thought

of the happiness that might ensue if this could be averted made her weep.

"Oh, sir," she exclaimed, "if you could be reconciled to your son might not all be well yet?"

"No! it cannot, it must not be, and for many reasons. He has, by such a connexion as this, lowered himself in the estimation of all his acquaintance; and, if he were received into society, certainly his wife never could. And then, there is the constant annoyance that must flow from her ignorance and vulgarity. For, however richly she may be dressed, her low breeding will betray itself before she open her mouth."

"But can we not cultivate her, sir?" rejoined his companion. "Mr. Frank must teach her how to speak, and I will instruct her in anything I can; and if she only love him half so ardently as report says, we shall make a lady of her yet."

Mr. Morland shook his head.

“It is only a happy delusion, madam; as well might you attempt to change a Fuegian into a social and agreeable companion. The class among which she has lived, and which, of course, she will resemble, are so thoroughly——”

The sentence was cut short by the entrance into the room of Mr. Wynn. He could with difficulty believe the testimony of his eyes when he saw Mr. Morland and their young visitor seated in calm but earnest conversation. She flew to meet him; and, taking him by the hand, asked, in a low voice, “How is Edwin this morning?” Perceiving the agitation of her mind, he led her into an adjoining room. Upon returning, he found Mr. Morland in deep grief; his hands, clasped over his eyes, rested on the table; unconscious was he that any except God witnessed his struggle. The

reverend gentleman retired a little while until his friend had composed himself."

"Would to God, sir, my son had seen a being so amiable as the treasure you have in your keeping," were the first words Mr. Morland spoke; "for he must have loved her; and then, oh, how happy he would have been. Who, and what is she, may I be allowed to ask?"

"She is an orphan we have taken under our protection, and is truly an amiable girl."

"She has been attempting to persuade me to be reconciled to my son; and, with true charity, endeavoured to give me hope that this factory girl may be taught something. Could you have believed it, sir? Not one young lady in a thousand would have done it. Oh, how I blessed her for the thought. But after seeing this guileless being, so innocent of the world's many deceits, I am reminded only

the more forcibly of her whose cause she has been advocating. My son has passed unnoticed the sweetest flower of the garden and plucked the gaudy poppy, whose painted leaves will soon wither and fall, leaving in his bosom nothing but the noxious stalk. For this ignorant girl could not overcome him by her lustre of mind or the display of any eminent virtues; consequently, his passion must be a mere animal one. And when that palls, and loses its charm, as it must ere long, and his cultivated mind pants for something more, but finds, when too late, that this indescribable source of happiness does not exist in the only well from which he ought to draw it,—then, I ask, what will become of my son? Driven to despair, he may be changed into a reprobate and an outcast. And, if so, far better for both of us had he never returned. But God forbid it: if he has

not taken the irrevocable step, there is yet hope."

"Frank is not married, sir."

"Then, by our united efforts, we may, perhaps, prevail with him to give up this mad affair; and for this purpose am I here to-day. But he must promise that her name shall never again——"

"It is useless, Mr. Morland, to waste time in these conjectures. I know that your son would readily give up every gift fortune has showered upon him,—nay, more, he would almost part with life itself, rather than barter his love for gold. But I must also say, that neither of them can be happy until they have your sanction for their union."

"That is a point, sir, we have already disposed of; and I am surprised that you should still persist in pressing it."

"Allow me one moment, sir, and I have done. Is it just, is it reasonable, I ask,

for you, or any other parent, to condemn his child unheard? I answer, No! And if you will grant us a few days' respite, in order to lay before you the proof of that for which we have now only belief, then will you no longer refuse them permission to kneel as children at your feet, and supplicate a blessing."

"Nothing shall ever induce me, voluntarily, to see the girl; nor——"

In the midst of this indignant language, Mr. Wynn left the room, returning in a few moments, but not alone. Mr. Morland started when he saw the young lady with whom he had a short time previously been conversing. She looked deadly pale, and had evidently been weeping.

"All entreaty, madam, is useless," said Mr. Morland, addressing her, "and, as it will only pain you to be refused, I beg of you not to plead the cause of that worthless girl, that——"

She to whom he was speaking burst forth from the restraint of her conductor, and flung herself at Mr. Morland's feet, exclaiming—

“I am that girl! I am Maria St. Crost! Oh, do not revile me.”

Mr. Morland covered his face with his hands, and was for some moments unable to utter a word.

“Not until this moment,” said he to Mr. Wynn, when his emotion allowed him to speak, “had I ceased to regard you as a good, but misled man; but now this insult has proved that it was my heart and not my judgment that guided me. You, madam, have acted your part well: rise.”

“Mr. Morland,” said the reverend gentleman, “I conjure you, by all you hold sacred, that you let not this opportunity of establishing your own happiness, the happiness of your son, of the suppliant at

your feet, pass unheard into futurity. Providence may not again vouchsafe you a like privilege."

"What a mad, intoxicating dream. This lady I would receive as my daughter with open arms. But this is not she of whom you spoke,—this is not the factory girl that you have talked about?"

"You see in the now inanimate form before you," replied Mr. Wynn, "the only being that ever shared with you the love of your son."

"Oh pride!" exclaimed Mr. Morland, "what misery dost thou bring upon us!"

When consciousness returned, Maria's lone wandering spirit could not believe the scene her eyes disclosed. Her head was pillowed on Mr. Morland's arm; whilst her dear friend, with a look of pleasure, stood by.

"It is a sweet dream," said she, and

hid her face in Mr. Morland's bosom.
"I dreamed he had forgiven me."

"It is I, my child, my daughter, who have to seek forgiveness," said Mr. Morland, imprinting a kiss on her forehead.

What an affecting moment for all. The reverend gentleman gazed on, lost in mute astonishment. "This," thought he, "is the crowning proof of Maria's goodness, and the power of it. She has gained the esteem of all whose hearts are susceptible of the beauty of virtue; and that, too, unaided by the allurements of birth or wealth: but the heart that is true needs neither the one nor the other to aid it in its contest with the world.

Mr. Morland addressed him, taking him by the hand:

"May I hope, sir, even after what has passed between us, still to call you my friend?"

“Never, until the evening of Frank’s return,” rejoined Mr. Wynn, “when our friendship was endangered, had I so strong a conviction that its continuance was essential to both of us; this was deduced from what I myself experienced upon that occasion. And that a friendship, such as ours had been, might last until death parted us, I then felt ought to form a portion of our daily prayers. Did we not both rejoice when good shone upon either of us, and comfort each other in time of affliction? Have we not taken sweet counsel together, and lived as brothers? Then why should we now become strangers to each other? Rather let the thoughts of the last few days be cast into oblivion, never again to recur to our minds; and, by our example, show others the happiness real friendship gives.”

“The presence of my son, Mr. Wynn, is alone wanting to perfect our joy.”

"He and Mr. Kenworthy are in Suffolk," replied the reverend gentleman. "We have received many letters from them; but, before discoursing on these topics, you must first hear Maria's history, for then they will require no explanation. But as she, as well as ourselves, is in too great a state of perturbation at present, I think we had better meet again in the evening, when our minds will be more tranquillized."

Maria's first act was to fly to Edwin, in order that she might be the one to communicate the happy tidings. Mr. Wynn had gradually broken to him the secret of Frank's love for Maria. But he looked upon it as a picture in which the foreground alone was bright and sunny, whilst all else, obscured by impending clouds, looked dark and threatening. Little did he think how soon these were to vanish, and disclose so fair and brilliant a prospect.

"Oh, Edwin," she exclaimed, "I have seen Mr. Morland, thrown myself at his feet, and he——"

"Spurned you from him. Would I had——"

"No, Edwin, he has received me as his child; has called me daughter. But you shall know all; you shall never again reproach me with concealing aught from you."

Edwin's health was not sufficiently restored to allow of his being removed from the Lodge. Consequently the party assembled at the Parsonage in the evening consisted only of Mr. Morland, the clergyman and his lady, and their young guest. But before learning Maria's history let us see how Frank's conduct in this affair was regarded by one who professed to feel an interest in his fate.

"Ann, I have some news for you," said Mr. Marsh to his daughter a few days

previous to that on which the event just narrated occurred; "Frank Morland is come home."

"Is he, indeed, papa? I am so glad. Have you seen him? How did he look? Did he ask after—after us?"

These questions followed each other in such quick succession, that Mr. Marsh was obliged to answer them as one.

"No, child," said he, "I did not see him; but those who did say he is now one of the handsomest young fellows you would wish to see."

"That, you know, he always was, papa: and then his manner was so gentlemanly. I dare say he will be calling upon us. I shall be in such a fidget all day."

"You need not, for he left home within thirty hours of his arrival there."

"But he will soon return—wont he, papa?"

“There is no telling, child, what he will, or what he will not do; he is mad enough for anything. It appears he had been paying his addresses to one of the mill girls; and the first thing he does when he gets home is to tell Mr. Morland he intends to marry her. His governor very coolly informed him, that he might do so if he wished to be cut off with a shilling. However, he still persists, and is gone somewhere or another to prove a cock and bull story the girl has been telling him.”

“Frank Morland marry a factory girl! Well, now, papa, did not I always say he was a young man of low tastes, and not fit for ladies’ society?”

“Report says she is one of the most pleasing creatures imaginable, and that there is some truth in her story.”

“And even if it were true, what a simpleton he will look when he brings his pretty mill girl into company; for she

will not have sense to hold her tongue. Oh, papa, I cannot help pitying him. I suppose he dared not choose an accomplished woman, fearing lest he should expose his own ignorance."

Unfortunately for herself, Ann's pride had not been lessened by the alteration in the position of her father's affairs. Her dignity was wounded at the thought that she should have been supplanted by one whose very name, yea, whose very existence was unknown to her.

CHAPTER VIII.

"The lovely young Lavinia once had friends,
And fortune smiled, deceitful, on her birth.
For, in her helpless years, deprived of all,
Of every stay, save Innocence and Heaven,
She and her widow'd mother—feeble, old,
And poor—lived in a cottage far retired."

THOMSON.

MARIA, seated on an ottoman placed at Mr. Morland's side, was about to commence her narrative, when the maid servant entered. "Please, ma'am, here is that young woman you have been making that black dress for. Must I tell her to call again?"

"Oh, it is Dinah Houghton," said the old lady. "I will come to her."

Mr. Wynn had met Dinah a few mornings before; and observing her countenance to be more melancholy than usual,

he questioned her as to the cause. She returned no answer, but lifted the corner of her apron to her eyes. "Do not be afraid, Dinah, of telling me anything in which my advice can assist you," said he.

"We thout sur, as th' chilt would ha gone wum last neet, but it wur better ith mornin, so ha coom off: an theyn just sent word as it's deod."

"Poor child. You did not tell me you were married."

"A'm noan wed, sur. But——"

"I see—I see; I remember you kept company with young Wright. But I always had a good opinion of him."

"It wur not him; young Mesther Marsh——"

"Young Marsh, ha! Well, I suppose the young reprobate has deserted you now?"

Dinah durst not look her interrogator in the face; but cast her eyes on the

ground as if more interested in the construction of a hole she was making with her clog in the cindered footpath than in the reverend gentleman's observation. "Ha-ve ne'er seen him sin they broke. An ha wish ha ne'er had done afore."

"I wish so too, for Tom Wright's sake as well as your own. He is a steady young man, and would have made you a good husband. But I think you must now see the folly of your conduct: and if you behave yourself well for the future there is no saying what may happen. How long had your child been ill?"

"It seemt as if it ollos dode ill, ever sin ha coom up here, for ha had't leave it wee it gronny; an hoos bin terrible fasht sin my father geet ate o' wark. He cannot make aboon three or four shillin a wick at t'moast. A if heed but his shop back, they met caw him Knobstick, or out as they'd a mind."

"I see little hope for that, Dinah. But call at the Parsonage and we will see what can be done for you."

Such was the circumstance which had brought her there that evening.

"Houghton—that is the name of the man who was the leader of the turnout," said Mr. Morland, catching the sound of the name.

"Which, though it produced many bitter fruits," replied Mr. Wynn, "it also gave us one rare and beautiful flower that we might otherwise never have possessed."

"But, unfortunately for me," rejoined Mr. Morland, "I was too long ignorant of the value of it. The man who is the cause, however unwittingly, of our being thus blessed, ought not to be forgotten."

These expressions brought a blush into Maria's cheeks as she looked up to mediate for the poor family: "They were so

humbled, so wretched, it would be an act of charity to give him his work again."

Nor did she appeal in vain: and was overjoyed to be the bearer of such glad news to poor Dinah. How altered was the relative position of these two girls, who a few days previously had worked together seemingly as equals. But now even Maria's unaffected manner could not restrain Dinah from paying her a marked respect. The lovely girl returned to the room laden with the blessings of her more unfortunate companion; and seeing the anxiety Mr. Morland evinced to hear her story, commenced at once, and related it as follows:—

"My father was descended from one of the families that settled, soon after the Norman Conquest, in the north east part of Suffolk. His more immediate ancestors had, however, migrated more to the west: and on the banks of the little Ouse is

situated the patrimonial estate. This had been heavily encumbered by several generations of spendthrifts; until my grandfather, who was a frugal man, once more restored the drooping fortunes of the family. At his death my father found himself one of the richest squires in that part of the country: and being a young man, fond of hunting and other field sports, his company was eagerly sought after. Among his boon companions was a gentleman of the name of Hawke, a solicitor of Hardston ——”

“Is he the same person who is, or was, clerk to the Poor Law Guardians of the Hardston Union?” asked Mr. Morland. “That man’s name was Hawke—Brutus Hawke.”

“I do not know, sir, what office he held: but you are not acquainted with him, are you, Mr. Morland? For it must be he.”

“I have heard of him, my daughter. How, you shall hear presently. But, proceed; your story interests me.”

“Mr. Hawke was respected for his shrewdness, and the application with which he addressed himself to his profession; but what gained for him the approbation of his acquaintance more than anything else was the joviality of his disposition; all his leisure moments being spent in the pleasures of society. With him lived an only sister, whose temper of mind was the very opposite to that displayed by her brother, his good nature being only feigned, for under it lay concealed a cruel and unfeeling mind. Fond of retirement, she wished for a more refined circle of friends than the generality of her brother's company afforded; they were principally fox-hunting yeomen, whose conversational topics consisted only of sporting and farming. Literature was to them a thing

unknown and uncared for; and, in fact, every man who showed a partiality for books, rather than for horses or dogs, except he was a clergyman or a lawyer, was looked upon as effeminate, and so beneath their notice. Though my father had received a college education, he never displayed his superiority in the presence of such company. His generous heart felt for the unhappy position of Miss Hawke; this feeling led to an attachment, and eventually to their marriage. My mother was now one of the happiest of women; united to a man of refinement, and enjoying all that wealth could command. Her only source of trouble was the concourse of guests that crowded my father's Hall, too frequently converting the calm retreat into a busy haunt of pleasure. Rich and poor were always received with an open-hearted welcome; but the latter were my mother's peculiar

care. One of my earliest remembrances is associated with the childish joy I felt at being allowed to accompany her when visiting the cottages of the labourers or the huts of the poorer villagers. The sincere gratitude expressed upon these occasions by the recipients of her bounty, made my young heart bound with pleasure. Little did these poor people, who were calling down blessings upon her and her children, and imploring God to protect them, little did they expect, and certainly none of them hoped, that she would ever receive from them a recompence; leaving that to Him who alone is able to repay deeds such as hers. But it was ordered otherwise."

"God, my child, seeth not as man seeth," said Mr. Wynn. "He dealeth with us not as we wish, but as he sees fit: ruling all things for our future good. Taking from us a few short years of life

here, but giving us in exchange an eternity. You are, however, anticipating your story."

"My uncle was a frequent guest at the Hall, and though his manner was always affable and kind both to Edwin and myself, still we had contracted an aversion for him, even from infancy; the sequel proved there was something more than simple prejudice in this. They were feelings I always endeavoured to suppress; little Edwin, on the contrary, never for a moment controlled his animosity. Time passed swiftly along, as years of unalloyed happiness always do. The different sports, as they succeeded one another, each brought its peculiar pleasures: and to participate in these, a ceaseless round of visitors arrived at the Hall. But it was during the hunting season that gaiety and mirth were more especially triumphant. And upon no

former occasion had a more goodly or numerous company met there than were assembled on the 20th of October, in the year 1840. The whole events and scenes of that day are as fresh to my memory as though I had witnessed them only yesterday. It was customary for the hunt to meet on the lawn, before proceeding to cover; and on the morning I have mentioned, about one hundred and fifty gentlemen and wealthy yeomen of the neighbourhood had assembled. I sat a little way apart on my black palfrey, waiting the conclusion of the council they held as to the best cover to be beaten for the day's sport. It was a morning such as a huntsman delights to see; a dull sky, with a gentle breeze from the south. The scarlet coats of the gentlemen, their noble and various coloured horses, and the brilliant dress of the huntsman, with his gold lace and silver horn, formed a

most animated group, that shone out in full relief from the back ground; for there stood the old mansion, sombre, but still pleasing, for its antiquity gave a tone to the whole scene; its spacious entrance hall and oak panelled rooms often elicited admiration, whilst the flower gardens and shrubberies were the delight of all. To Edwin and myself it was a Paradise; for our childish imaginations could not conceive anything more lovely; but it was home, and so possessed a thousand endearments that many of us feel, but few can express. On one side of the horsemen were congregated the hounds, many of them being hidden from view, only their tails appearing above the brush-wood. Behind these, and closing in the picture, rose a dense wood of forest trees. My father rode up to me, holding Edwin before him on his horse, for we were to accompany them to cover; and

shortly after Captain Hardy joined us. This gentleman was my father's bosom friend, and all but shared with him the affections of his children. He was the joy of our young hearts; his return from sea being looked forward to by us, not so much on account of the presents we knew he would bring, as for a renewal of his companionship in our sports. A bachelor, and fond of children, he regarded us with almost a parent's love. He came to take leave of me, duty prevailing over enjoyment. The ship he then commanded was a large one, chartered for China; and having sailed down the river, she was lying, weather bound, off Greenwich. He had taken advantage of this to spend the last days he would be in England with us. A sudden moderation in the weather had, however, induced him to depart for town in so abrupt a manner. My father knew his character too well to urge him to re-

main; and it was with difficulty that I prevailed with him to accompany us during our short ride. My uncle had requested to ride, during the day, my father's favourite horse, a well-made and valuable animal, and one that seldom failed to be in at the death. After a little beating, Reynard broke cover; and instantly men and hounds swept away with the speed and noise of a hurricane. My father shook his friend by the hand, 'God bless you,' said he, 'I hope we shall meet again soon.' Kissing his little boy, he placed him in the arms of Captain Hardy, and waving his hand to us, with a sweet smile on his countenance, galloped away. The friends had parted, never more to meet on this side the grave."

Maria's emotion upon bringing vividly before her mind a subject of so painful a nature, was greater than she could control. Mr. Morland, who held her hand

in his own, could scarcely refrain himself from weeping. "This is too heartrending a subject, my child; you had better pass it over."

"I cannot, sir," said she, as her lovely eyes were raised to meet his gaze of sympathy; "if I omit all that is sad and melancholy, I must be silent. God, when He sent my trials, sent me also strength to bear them; and now that He has blessed me, shall a woman's weakness prevent me telling of His goodness? No! I will endeavour to be collected. My father's last smile has never faded from my mind. Often have I looked with infantine glee at the silvery tints with which the sun's last rays lit up the edge of the thunder-cloud that was about to obscure it. Looking only at this, I thought not of the darkness that was to follow. Well—we returned to the Hall,

and then came the sorrowful moment that was to part us from our playmate. Our young eyes were not the only moist ones; my mother shed many tears; and even the captain was more than usually affected. It was to be a final farewell for her, and a long and bitter separation for us. However, as the morning passed away the sun broke forth, and our griefs were for a time almost forgotten; when, about four o'clock in the afternoon, the huntsman rode on to the lawn, and asked to speak with my mother. His look was wild and haggard; such as one might wear who had just committed some foul deed. The instant my mother saw him, his strange appearance caught her attention, and filled her with apprehension: something had happened. Her first thought was for her husband. 'Oh, Giles,' she exclaimed, 'there has been

an accident!' He inclined his head, but remained silent. 'Is it your master? For heaven's sake tell me!'

" 'Yes, ma'am,' said he, in an unusual tone of voice; 'his horse came down.'

" 'But that is not all, Giles. Oh, do not keep me in suspense.'

"At that moment a farmer's cart appeared in sight, advancing up the avenue. The feelings of the wife overcame the timidity of the woman, and she flew to meet her husband, but was restrained from coming near the cart.

" 'What, is he dead?' she exclaimed.

"The silence of those around was her only answer. She fell into the arms of one of her attendants, and was carried back to the Hall, apparently as lifeless as her husband. The account of this sad accident, as we afterwards heard it, was this: they had made a fine run for the first ten miles, Mr. Hawke, my father,

another gentleman, and the huntsman being the only part of the field that were up with the hounds. The horse my father rode, though as swift as his favourite one, was not so good a leaper. With this circumstance Mr. Hawke was perfectly conversant, and knew also that whatever the horse he rode took, that my father was on would follow. He, leading a few yards, leaped over a deep wide sluice, one bank of which was much higher than the other; my father followed almost instantaneously. He had seen the danger in time, but could not check the impetuosity of his horse, who only got his forefeet on the opposite bank, when, unable to regain his balance, he fell back on his rider, and both rolled into the water. The gentleman who was following close behind, reined up, but so suddenly that he was thrown, and stunned by the fall. When he recovered his senses he found

himself alone, and lying on the edge of the sluice; while below him, and in the water, lay my father and his horse. His feet had got entangled in the stirrup, and he was kept down by the body of the animal, which had broken its back, and so must have died immediately. My uncle might have heard the fall, for he turned his head, but galloped on. Now he was as well acquainted with the nature of the ground as the huntsman himself, who took the leap in a less dangerous part, and knew nothing of the accident until returning. A messenger was sent to inform Captain Hardy of the melancholy event, but returned the next day without seeing him, his ship having sailed. I will pass over the narration of all our sorrows, as this would be needless. My mother was distracted—overwhelmed by the magnitude of her bereavements, which years of uninterrupted happiness had ren-

dered her quite unfit to cope with. My uncle superintended the funeral arrangements; and after the ceremony was over, assembled the tenantry in the large hall for the public reading of the will. This my mother opposed in rather strong language, as being an unnecessary parade. Never, to my dying day, shall I forget the expression his features assumed. Until then I had not seen them without a smile: it makes me shudder to think of it, even yet."

"My dear girl," remarked Mr. Wynn, "the countenance that wears a constant smile but too often borrows it only to mask some dark and insidious design; which, if not thus cloaked, would defeat its own purpose, and lay open to the world the workings of the mind that had conceived it."

"And so it proved in my uncle's case. He informed her that he was now master

there, and would do as he pleased; his gruff manner cast an additional gloom over every countenance, whilst Edwin, overawed by his look, hid himself in the folds of his mother's dress. The will was dated about eight months previously. It commenced by bequeathing various sums to the older servants and tenantry, and one of a large amount to my uncle,—I think it was ten thousand pounds. The former part, that relating to the servants and tenantry, had been cancelled. The rest of the property, after paying an annuity to his widow, was devised to Edwin and myself,—Captain Hardy and my uncle being sole executors. This concluded, he produced a bundle of parchments, and proceeded to read several mortgage deeds. The sum of these amounted to eighty thousand pounds, bearing interest at the rate of five per cent., my uncle being the mortgagee. 'The

rent-roll of the estate,' he went on to say, 'would barely suffice to meet this, even supposing he were to wave his legacy altogether, which justice to his own family forbad him to do. But if my mother would remove to a small house in the village, more suitable to her reduced means than the Hall, then he might consider whether to live there himself, or let it for their mutual benefit.' You may well imagine the dismay with which we all received this dreadful intelligence. To my mother, already weakened by grief and anxiety, it was the feather that weighed down the poised balance, and she was borne from the room to her bed. She prayed often and fervently for life, in order that she might watch over her children. And though her prayer was granted, she never recovered from the shock. Our young hearts, however, on the contrary, retained not the vivid im-

pressions of sorrow so long; for although the house we were now removed to was very different from the old mansion, still the presence of a kind and watchful mother transforms the poor cottage into a palace of contentment. And as she had now become our instructor, and we were receiving every hour the proof of her love, so was our happiness more full, if that was possible, than before. My mother still visited the aged and poor cottagers, depriving herself of many comforts in order to relieve their wants. By them she was regarded as a wronged and deeply injured woman. Many whispered their thoughts to each other, but none dared to talk openly about these matters. Among those of the tenantry who had a great respect for the family, was a man named Goodram. Poor, honest John Goodram! he would have staked his life for the protection of my mother or her

children. He spoke plainly to her about the rumours of foul play that were circulating in the village; strongly urging her to have the affair thoroughly sifted. But, to accomplish this, there were numerous and weighty obstacles to be encountered. My uncle had been the family solicitor for many years, and was in possession of all the papers and documents. The difficulty appeared too great to be undertaken without the assistance of Captain Hardy. So the investigation was postponed until his return. At the expiration of a year, for that was about the length of time to which his absence from England usually extended, we began to look with anxious hearts for the arrival of his ship being announced. We frequently conversed on the singularity of no letters having been received from him during that period. Such a thing had never before occurred; and, happening

just now, when circumstances were at so critical a juncture, our fears were easily excited. These apprehensions we soon learned were not unfounded. A newspaper paragraph informed us that the ship Edith, so named in honour of my mother, outward bound for China, Captain Hardy, which was spoken on the 14th of December off the Cape of Good Hope, had not since been heard of,—fears being entertained for her safety. We still flattered ourselves with a delusive hope, framing excuses for nonintelligence of all imaginable descriptions. During these two years, for a second had now passed by, my uncle had not once called at our cottage, though his wife occasionally came to visit us. She appeared to envy my mother the happiness she enjoyed; for, in spite of all her bereavements, it was a sweet pleasure to her to watch over and train our young minds."

“Of what inestimable value to the welfare of the State, is such a mother,” said Mr. Morland; “she instils into the expanding ideas of her children nothing but goodness and truth. How many generations might not our Empire last, did she but possess a few more such instructors. But I am interrupting you, my child.”

“I well remember,” continued Maria, “the happy smile that beamed upon her pale, thoughtful, but still beautiful countenance, when, on returning after a short absence, instead of finding us at play, she discovered us at our lessons. Upon one of the visits with which the fair spy condescended to honour us, for we had all along concluded that it was not friendship which brought Mrs. Hawke from the Hall to the cottage, she left a newspaper behind her, whether designedly or not we never could tell. My mother was running her eye carelessly over its columns, when

her attention became arrested by one of the paragraphs, headed, 'Loss of the Ship Edith.' I forget the exact words, but shall never cease to remember the purport of them, nor the grief they occasioned to all of us; it stated that the Editor had received information, from a source upon which he could rely, that Captain Hardy had, in a most disgraceful and unseaman-like manner, lost the splendid ship of which he had the command, by running her on the well-known Andrade Rocks, situated in the China Seas, and that himself and all hands were drowned. For the news of his death we were almost prepared; but to hear that not only his own life, but also the lives of his crew, had been sacrificed through his ignorance or neglect, was what we neither could nor would believe. But time rolled on, and nothing more was heard of the gallant Captain Hardy. Four years had passed

since my father's death, when we were one day startled by the presence of my uncle at our peaceful cot; the object of his visit, he said, was to make arrangements for removing Edwin to a public school. This was strenuously opposed by all the arguments a mother could adduce. He told her it was useless to offer any opposition; for, as he was the legal guardian of the child, he would compel her to give him up. My mother bade him leave her house, saying she would never part with Edwin. The next day, however, my uncle's chariot stopped at the gate; and two footmen entering the house took up Edwin, and placed him in the carriage, which immediately drove off. A note from the Hall informed us, that he had been placed at school in a neighbouring town. This was a sad blow to our poor mother; and was shortly followed by one of a different nature; but both were evi-

dently designed for the same purpose—that of breaking the widow's heart, and thus hastening, perhaps by many years, the final scene of my uncle's villany. A communication was received from him stating that through many untoward and disastrous events having occurred, he could no longer make us more than one half the allowance he had, up to this time, done; and that even this small pension might at any time be withdrawn, for, being only a gift, it would cease at his pleasure; thus adding as a sting, the thought that we were dependent on him for our daily bread. My mother replied to him, not in feelings of anger, but of deep and wounded sorrow; for pity alone could move a breast like hers, a compassion for a man who would insult a sister he had brought to poverty. She told him she wished not to rob him of his money, and would accept of no more from him; all

she wanted was her child. If he would give her back her boy, he might then cease to remember the widow and her orphans, who, if God willed it, she was able to maintain by her own industry, well knowing that He who had promised to be a father to the fatherless, and a shield to the widow, would not desert her. These were not hastily penned words, but written with many prayers and tears. They proved, however, of no avail. Her brother's heart was hardened against her, and he never deigned even to reply, and months passed without our seeing or hearing from Edwin. Our time was now fully occupied; and our books and needles, which had before been only a source of amusement, became to us the means of livelihood. For when the forlorn condition to which we were reduced became known, a few of the ladies in the neighbourhood sent us a little sewing, and

rendered us other trifling assistances. A certain portion of each week-day was devoted to instructing the young children of the cottagers. For many years my mother had taken great delight in infusing into the minds of these poor village girls a due conception of the benefit they might derive in after life from the useful female occupations she taught them; and at the same time never neglected any opportunity to instil into their young hearts a reverence for religion."

"But was she not assuming a prerogative that ought to have been wielded by other hands?" asked Mr. Wynn.

"A few traits of the man's character to whose care was intrusted the eternal welfare of hundreds of his fellow-creatures will be sufficient to show, that in thus acting, she was endeavouring, with her feeble strength, to bring the lambs, left by a hireling to die on the way side, into

the fold of which he ought to have been the shepherd. The living, which is a very valuable one, I think it is estimated at about a thousand a-year, unfortunately became vacant a few months after the accident that had made such a change in our affairs; this was occasioned by the death of the rector, a venerable old man, who had held the benefice upwards of half a century. The right of presentation, which had belonged to my father's family for many centuries, Mr. Hawke thought he might venture to exercise; accordingly the vacancy was filled up by a man after his patron's own heart: a Mr. Gay by name; the endowment, so it was reported, being shared between the two. He was a worldly minded man; one who thought more about the pleasures of the table than his duty to his God; and preferred to lead the chase in a fox-hunt rather than attend to his cure. He was known

to most of the frequenters of every fair and race course for many miles round, in consequence of his being seldom absent from such places of amusement. Cards and the billiard table occupied more of his time than divinity or the sick bed."

"Mr. Gay is an example of a class of men who are fast disappearing from the ranks of the clergy," remarked Mr. Wynn. "As the population of the country advanced in knowledge, and we must hope in morality also, they would no longer submit to have their feelings outraged by such infamous conduct; and the whole nation cried 'Shame!' But as men, even the best of men, are ever prone to deviate from the right way; so no sooner have we got rid of this extreme, than we find ourselves gradually urged on to an opposite one. Many are now not content with the simple black coat, but are trans-

forming the clergyman into the priest, and man into the mediator between God and his fellow-men. I do not know if your picture or mine contain the more dangerous subject."

CHAPTER IX.

“It often falls, in course of common life,
That Right long time is overborne of Wrong,
Through avarice, or power, or guile, or strife,
That weakens her, and makes her party strong ;
But Justice, though her dome she doe prolong,
Yet, at the last, she will her own cause right.”

SPENSER.

“THE only requitals my mother had hitherto received,” continued Maria, “were the blessings of the children and their parents, and the pleasure of doing good. But now the little innocents seldom came empty handed ; and whilst my mother received their gifts with tears, she experienced a joy the rich can never feel, and which I myself felt a few days ago,—but more of that anon. What a blessing must attend upon the overflow-

ings of these poor, thankful, noble hearts. Silent and spontaneous witnesses of an untutored mind. Anxiety on Edwin's account began to injure my mother's health, which grew gradually worse, until, in a few months, she was confined to the house. At my earnest entreaty she consented to write once more to my uncle; but it elicited no reply. The great man disdained to answer the appeals of one so lowly and full of sorrow, though lying on a bed of sickness, from which she was never again to rise. Our best friends were John Goodram and his family. He discovered, by some means, where Edwin was; and sent one of his sons to acquaint him of my mother's illness. Escaping from the control to which he had been subjected, he flew to her bedside, but only in time to receive her blessing, and cheer by his presence the dying moments of our beloved parent. We had now only God

left; and,—oh! my more than friends,—you can imagine what our feelings were, when we found ourselves alone in the world. We clasped each other in one long embrace, and vowed never to part, giving way to unrestrained grief. But the most affecting scene for the beholders was, when the time came for us to take a last fond look at her who had loved us so well, and whose sweet voice we were not to hear again until it welcomed us to the regions of bliss, where she was doubtless gone before, and to prepare us for which she had laboured so long and so willingly. But I cannot—no, I cannot describe it; for, with the exception of one short period since, I never experienced any sensation so truly harrowing.”

“I saw you under the last trial, my child,” said Mr. Wynn, “and never before did I witness affliction borne with greater Christian resignation. Often have I won-

dered at the goodness of God, who gives to one a mental, and to another a bodily capability to endure the vicissitudes of life, and allots to every one the qualifications necessary for each; so that none who trust in Him may faint by the way. For if it were not thus, how could a form so delicate as your own have sustained its dark and hopeless warfare, if not assisted by a mind, in which a reliance upon Divine Will predominated over every other feeling?"

"Well, my daughter," remarked Mr. Morland, "I suppose Mr. Hawke now took compassion on you."

"Oh, sir!—would we had never seen him!" said Maria. "Though my mother's death must have been known to him, he came not to comfort us. But Goodram took us into his family. Poor old man!—none of us imagined what ruin would follow this act of love. He was one of

the best farmers on the estate; and had brought up in respectability a family of sixteen children. He was ambitious to see his youngest son, a boy of quick parts, something higher than a farm labourer, and wished to educate him for the law."

"A laudable pride," remarked Mr. Morland; "but still one that often leads to the ruin, rather than the welfare, of its object."

"This project was mentioned to my uncle, and he advanced the sum requisite for placing the youth at a solicitor's office in an adjoining town. The money had, unfortunately, been borrowed on such terms that it could be reclaimed, with interest, at a moment's notice. Accordingly, one morning, soon after he had taken us to his home, my uncle's bailiff called upon Goodram, and without assigning any reason, informed him that if the sum, together with the small balance of

rent that was due, were not paid on the following day, he would be sold up. The good old man was astounded, as well he might. He knew not of anything he had done to warrant such a proceeding. His farm, which his ancestors had held for centuries, and himself had farmed for above forty years without a word of complaint, was in better condition than those of many of his neighbours; what the motive might be he could not conceive. But when I said it was, perhaps, for protecting the poor orphans that he was about to suffer, a new light appeared to break in upon him. And, taking us each by the hand, his long silvery hair shook with emotion as he prayed to God that it might be granted him to be a father to us, and so, be the humble instrument through which His all powerful aid would be showered upon us. Poor old man!—It pleased God that his prayer should

not be granted. Nevertheless, it will be one of the greatest pleasures in store for me to reward him. He went immediately to the Hall, and found our fears but too true. The only alternative allowed him was, to turn us out of doors. This he refused to do, and angry words ensued. I now knew that the ruin of the family was contemplated, and that, too, on our account. Without much premeditation, I resolved to overcome all feelings of repugnance, and throw myself at my uncle's feet. Accordingly, unknown to our protector, I set out, and, taking Edwin along with me, repaired to the house of my forefathers. We went as poor orphans—not to supplicate for the bounty of our proud kinsman—but only to beg that we might not be the means of bringing an aged and innocent man to poverty. The hard-hearted man, having first feasted his eyes on our abject condition, commanded

us to be gone; nor did we require a second mandate, but fled in terror. In a few days Goodram was sold up and driven, illegally, from his farm; he and his sons having to hire themselves out as labourers. But his persecutor, with a refinement of cruelty, would not allow him the gratification of retaining that for which he had suffered so much: he assumed his power as my father's executor, of controlling our movements, and placed us at the cottage of one of his own creatures. Here he frequently came for the purpose of upbraiding us, saying our presence was the very bane of his existence. These taunts so exasperated Edwin that a constant watch had to be kept over him to prevent his escaping to the village. His motive in dealing thus with us was, that by wishing to be relieved from his reproaches, we should the more willingly consent to be removed to some

other part of the country. And in this he succeeded,—everything tending to the accomplishment of his wicked designs. For when he informed us that it was his intention to send us to Lancashire, where we could maintain ourselves, and thus cease to be a burden to him, we received the intelligence with as much joy as the condemned criminal hears the reprieve that saves him from slavery; though, at the same time, it was the sentence that banished us from the scenes of our childhood. But these no longer possessed the charm they once had. The parents and dearly loved friend were now no more, or removed from us, perhaps for ever; and each object only served the purpose of bringing to our memories those happy days we had spent together, living in blissful ignorance of the evil time so fast approaching. And though it is good for us to think of the departed ones, those

that we have loved and respected in life, still, to us, these reflections were mingled with bitter thoughts of the living, — thoughts which, though not charitable, it was impossible for us to repress. However, when we learnt the conditions by which we were to be bound, both Edwin and myself refused to go. We were to take a solemn oath never to divulge any portion of the history of our lives, or anything relating to our family, up to that period. My uncle was perplexed at our ‘obstinacy,’ as he termed it; storming and threatening us with his vengeance, until, at last, we consented with this demur,—‘That when Captain Hardy returned to England, then we were to be at liberty to speak.’ Our fond remembrance of him had never allowed us to believe him dead. And, as if some inward voice was speaking to us, we still hoped for his return; and trusted to that, through God,

for the justice which he alone seemed able to obtain for us."

"Strong, indeed, must have been that hope which survived the lapse of years," remarked Mr. Morland. "How unsearchable are the ways by which He who rules all directs the events of this world!"

"The oath was administered to us by the rector."

"What!" exclaimed Mr. Wynn, in amazement, "could he, a clergyman, be so unmindful of his sacred office, as to lend himself to the completion of an act as impious as it was unjust? All this, however, took place at the cottage, I suppose?"

"Oh no, sir! I wish it had been so. They were desirous to make it as solemn to our young minds as possible; and, for that purpose, took us to the church, intending to administer the oath at the communion rails. Upon arriving at the

porch, I resolutely refused to enter the sacred edifice; saying, that no power on earth should compel me to commit so sacrilegious an act. Edwin, upon this, took courage also, and caught hold of one of the stone ornaments with which the richly sculptured doorway was decorated. How could I profane the church I had ever regarded with feelings of the deepest reverence, and within the walls of which my infant lips had been taught to move in prayer? The building is one that would fill the most obdurate heart, even if religion had no lodgment there, with a reverential awe. Its spire of beautiful fretwork, through which, on a clear night, the stars, like diamonds, glittered, sparkling with additional brilliancy because they shone alone, points to the sky, reminding us that there is another world above, to which our thoughts ought to be directed, and that the way to it was

through the house of prayer. The windows, too, are most graceful to look upon; for, like the waters of some fair river, after spreading beauty and fertility around, separate into numerous streams, and, meandering through the Delta, lose themselves in the ocean, so are the mullions detached into flowing lines, one after another, and received into the pointed arch, which is like a rocky coast indented by rivulets. Often have my childish fingers moved with desire to touch the rich and deeply carved foliage; but, above all, the oak wreath, with its acorns, ripe and full, that clustered round the capitals of the piers, or hung in elegant festoons on the slender shafts, as though they had been placed there only to make them the more sacred ere they graced some victor's manly brow. Oh, what a tumult of thoughts come crowding into my mind when memory places me

again in that lovely abode of prayer, with its windows still 'casting a dim religious light' over the tombs and monuments of many generations of my ancestors, now sleeping within it. But I am digressing, and wearying you with mere unintelligible words, in a too fond attempt to describe that in which you can take no interest."

"Not so, Maria," exclaimed her reverend auditor ; "your delineation has charmed me the more from its not being given in the language of an architect. The church must have been built about the fourteenth century, and will doubtless be a rich specimen of the style prevailing at that period, and which, for beauty and profusion of ornament, has never been surpassed. Such a building,—if God dwelt in temples made with hands, as many in these days would have us superstitiously believe,—would be worthy of a peculiar blessing."

“You have named the century in which it was erected, sir; but I did not tell you, and we never talked upon this subject before; did we, sir?”

“No, my child,” replied Mr. Wynn; “but at some future time I will explain how I knew the date so exactly.”

“My story now brings me to the final scene of this tragedy, I might almost term it,” continued Maria. “No violence was used towards me: but Edwin they tore from his hold; not, however, without a struggle, for despair had strengthened his young hands. When they found nothing would prevail with me, and that I would not enter the building, they administered the oath outside the porch.”

“Of what nature was the oath?” asked Mr. Morland.

“Oh, sir, I cannot, I dare not repeat it. I am filled with horror at the very thought of it. Do not press me. Suffice

it to say, we took it, and bound ourselves by it to keep secret for ever all that had transpired, unless we should again behold our father's friend."

"How marked is the directing power of Providence in all this," said Mr. Wynn. "Your uncle never for a single moment imagined that Captain Hardy would return again to England; and, even if he had thought that probable, he must have been aware how slight the chance would be that you could ever hear of it. But there was one who cared for you; and, in His sight the deep designed plots of man are all futile, because to Him they are all laid bare. Nevertheless, I cannot help thinking that this vow was not binding. The threats with which it was extracted, the perversion of truth to obtain it, the law of the land set at nought, and the rights of mankind insulted, all lead to such a conclusion. God could not sanc-

tion their wicked deed. Our church in one of her Articles says, 'a man may swear, when a magistrate requireth, in a cause of faith and charity, so it be done in justice, judgment, and truth.' Dr. Paley says, in his 'Moral Philosophy,' 'Whether promises which are extorted by violence and fear are binding, will depend upon this,—whether mankind, upon the whole, are benefited by the confidence placed in such promises.' Now, neither charity, justice, nor truth, were apparently to be served here, but their contraries; for many have been, and now are, suffering innocently. Thus, good faith is corrupted, and truth made to further the evil intentions of wicked men. In this view I think I should be borne out by many eminent divines. But, after all, it is only the wisdom of man, and it was otherwise ordained."

"What a vile, worthless person your

uncle must be! But he cannot be happy," said Mrs. Wynn. They were the first words the old lady had spoken since Maria commenced her narrative—having never removed her eyes from the countenance of the lovely girl. She wept when the tale was one of joy or sorrow; or, moved with a feeling of abhorrence when oppression was its theme, her brows became contracted.

"Oh, we must not judge him. God, in his own time, will requite him," said Maria. And, as she gently embraced the aged lady, she looked like a being of a happier world. For not a word of condemnation fell from her lips against the man who had robbed her of everything but her honour and her name.

Having resumed her seat at Mr. Morland's side, she proceeded with her story:

"Immediately upon the completion of the ceremony, we were placed in a coach

that was in waiting at the gates of the churchyard, and conveyed the same day to Peterborough, where we arrived before dusk: this city being chosen in preference to Ely, in order to lessen the risk of a chance recognition from any one. It was a lovely evening in July, and the last rays of the setting sun rested on the turrets of the central tower only of the cathedral. Whether it was the melancholy state of my mind at the time that made me more susceptible of the solemn grandeur of that portion of the cathedral which we saw whilst passing through the city, or because I had never seen so large or magnificent a building before, I know not, but it remains impressed on my memory as distinctly as when I saw it that evening. The dawn began to show, and I had not closed my eyes in sleep: quarter after quarter, and hour after hour, had the sweet-toned bells in the

lofty steeple of a church in the city chimed forth their harmonious warning that time was gliding by. Early in the morning we found ourselves at the railway station, awaiting the arrival of a train for the North. It was then that we first became aware of the real circumstances under which we were being sent to Lancashire. But whilst we protested against the treachery that had been practised against us, the carriages came up. All was now in such a state of bustle and confusion, and everything done so quickly, that we had left the old city many miles ere I could collect myself sufficiently to interrogate my companions. Having never seen a railway before, I was terrified at the velocity with which we appeared to fly through the air. A near object was only seen for an instant, and then disappeared as though opposing torrents were sweeping it and ourselves

in contrary directions: we outstripped the very birds in their flight. By degrees my fears subsided, and upon arriving at Derby our attention was drawn to the cotton mills; but of these we obtained a nearer view at a place called Belper. Everything here looked so neat and clean, that I began to imagine my mind had been deceiving itself as to what I should find in the manufacturing districts. But Sheffield, whilst it undeceived, also prepared me for that which I might expect. The ground was black with coals or cinders, and nothing was visible except the tops of a few houses, over which the railway seemed to be carried, the rest of the town being concealed by an impenetrable veil of smoke. Long before reaching Manchester the opinion, too hastily formed, had vanished. Any unprejudiced person who has lived in the neighbourhood of a large manufacturing town,

cannot avoid being struck with the marked contrast exhibited by the population, the houses, and even by vegetation itself, when compared with men and scenes amongst which commerce has not obtruded her footsteps. But to me, who had never, previously to that day, seen smoke more dense than that which rose from the wood or turf fires of the villagers, adding, as it did by its agreeable fragrance, an additional pleasure to the enjoyments of rural life,—every object, both animate and inanimate, wore the same dirty, dingy aspect. ‘What madness,’ thought I, ‘for any one not compelled by necessity to drag on an existence in a country so dismal as this, when a few short hours would place him in the midst of nature as God made it, and where the sun may be seen to shine unobscured.’ I was glad when we had quitted Manchester, and breathed once

more an atmosphere comparatively clear. But the pleasure was not of long continuance; for, after passing several immense cotton mills, that rose far and near on either hand, the train entered in less than half an hour a large station, and Hargreaves came to inform us that we were now at the town near which Mr. Morland's mills were situated. I thought we had quitted the most disagreeable place in the world when we left Manchester, but that at which we had arrived looked infinitely worse; and as I have never seen either of them since that day, my impressions are still the same. Upon passing through the streets, I was struck with the appearance of the people we saw there, and could almost have fancied myself walking through an American town. For whilst many were pale and hollow-cheeked, others, more robust, were almost as black as the natives

of Africa. Weariness and dejection caused me to pass many things unnoticed, longing as I did for any place, however humble, in which I might rest myself. You can picture my joy, my surprise, at finding such a home as that to which good old Hargreaves and his dame made me welcome. And since that evening some of the happiest, and many of the most contented hours of my life have been spent at the Lodge. But though you know the rest I cannot refrain from narrating one circumstance connected with Edwin's accident. The morning after it had occurred, two of the workmen from the mill came to the Lodge and asked to see me. They said, that having got permission from the manager, they had made a collection for my brother in the mills. It amounted to two pounds sixteen shillings; and that sum they placed in my hands. I stood as one dumb: a

testimony of compassion like this was so affecting at such a moment; and though we often had collections for those of our fellow-workers who were not able to contribute to the sick-fund, still I was quite unprepared for it. The amount had been collected in sums varying from twopence to sixpence. Oh, will not such noble acts as these—the poor man's mite given in a true spirit of charity—one day outshine the thousands bestowed in mere ostentation?"

"Yes, my child," replied Mr. Wynn, "it is not the amount of the gift, but the cheerfulness of the donor, that pleases Him to whom all creation belongs. And amongst the operatives of this neighbourhood, I have frequently, very frequently, observed with pleasure the feelings of commiseration they exhibit for the sufferings of those of their own class. A feeling, as you remarked, of true charity, that

resolves itself into deeds. And were it not for these timely gifts how many a poor fellow-worker would be left to the cold ungracious attentions of Poor Law officers."

"I remained so long silent," resumed Maria, "that the men were leaving without my having spoken. I stopped them, saying, 'Oh, do not think, my friends, that I am so ungrateful as not even to thank you. But many of these poor people are as much in want of the money as my brother: I can still work—and Mr. Morland has been very kind, he has sent us something.' I will give you the reply they made in their own words, for their untutored language showed better the goodness of their hearts. 'We lip-pent as yood leefer nuss him yoursel, an then yor mit pick up a bit, for yoor nooan fit do mitch. An when we're a constant wark we con spare it weel aneuf.' 'But,'

said I, 'there is the poor widow woman, she whose son was killed the other day in the coal pit. Oh do let me give her half of it——' 'They geet hur ten shillin beside,' said one of the men. 'An they'd o gan hur summut fro th' sick club, but ween run bad wi' there bein so monny folk ill last year.' 'Well,' rejoined I, 'give her this too; and may heaven bless those who have helped us even in thought.' The men were as much moved as I was myself. If Frank would allow me, I should like to give them the hundred pound note he left with me, so as to place their funds within the reach of the poorest of them."

"A request that Frank will not refuse," said Mr. Morland, "and I will place another to it of like value in order that your gift may be the more acceptable. Little did I imagine, my child, that there was so near to me in my hours of distress

a being whose gentle breast was overburdened with a sorrow that sprung from a like source as my own. Would it not have been a comfort to join our supplications in one, and as we prayed for guidance to Frank, so might we have also done for inward strength to ourselves. But I was not worthy so great a blessing; heaven withheld it in order that my pride might be humbled."

"Oh, do not say that, sir," replied Maria, as she looked up into his face, in which beamed a smile of paternal joy. "Was there not one day in each week when our petitions ascended together to the throne of grace? On that day not we alone, but many who were assembled with us, besought God that it might please him 'to succour, help, and comfort all that were in danger, necessity, and tribulation; and to preserve all that travelled by land and by water.' At that portion

of the service my eyes always rested on you, hoping, that though our hearts were not one, our prayers might be. And, afterwards to you, who knew me not, my meagre story might well appear a fiction, and my conduct reprehensible. For when Frank claimed the poor factory girl for his bride, he was unable to relate to you more than the name of her he loved; she was to him what she seemed to be."

"Not so," said Mr. Wynn; "Frank knew full well that so much grace and innocence must proceed from a source as pure as it was lovely. Not the beauty of the flower so much as the fragrance of its perfume arrested his attention."

A blush mantled Maria's cheek as the reverend gentleman spoke, and she was about to reply, when a gentle tap was heard at the room door, as if some one wished to enter.

"Come forward," said Mrs. Wynn, sup-

posing it to have been one of the maid servants. The door swung open, disclosing Captain Hardy and his young friend. Neither gentleman advanced a step, but remained transfixed by the unexpected sight that met their gaze; and in their extreme but silent expression of surprise, appeared to those within like fancy might paint the countenances of the excavators of Herculaneum upon first opening one of the chambers in which the pomp of some noble Roman had been entombed above sixteen hundred years: for as those men well knew that many things they then beheld would crumble into dust the moment the place became charged with the heavier atmosphere they were admitting, and thus vanish from their ravished sight, so they only looked the more earnestly at what they saw; thus was it with them, they stood in mute astonishment, as though the happy scene that so suddenly

presented itself was only a delusion, the spell of which a word, a gesture, might destroy. Maria was the first to break the charm: for she bounded forward, and was received into the arms of her guardian, the best loved friend of her childhood.

How sweet is the reunion of kindred spirits after a long and weary separation; let never so many years have intervened between the hour of parting and that of meeting, the two moments are united, joined together in the long and fervent embrace; the lapse of time is forgotten, and memory is at fault.

Though Maria was changed in form, her heart still retained its affections and innocence as pure as that day on which she lost a parent and a friend. "Is not this, indeed, a happy moment?" said she.

In the mean time Mr. Morland had pressed Frank to his heart. "Forgive

me, my son," exclaimed he, "I wronged you! I wronged you!"

"Oh, my father," said Frank, "it is I must ask it. On my knees I implore a blessing for Maria and myself."

"You have had that already, my son, in my prayers for your happiness; I too have now a share in your Maria, having called her my child and my daughter."

There was no need of any formal introduction between the stranger and his new friends; Frank and Maria having already made them mutually acquainted by their respective narratives. An Englishman's welcome responded to by a sailor's greeting commenced a friendship as sincere as it was likely to prove lasting.

Maria had numberless questions to ask about her old friends in Suffolk; and these Frank would willingly have answered at once; but when their hostess learnt that the day had been spent in

travelling, she insisted upon their taking a little refreshment first. And, during the repast, Mr. Wynn, at Frank's request, related what had passed since his departure, dwelling upon the adventure of that morning, Maria's latest triumph.

It was a pleasing theme to all, but to none more so than to Mr. Morland himself: for, though humbled, he was now a happier and a wiser man. When that very morning dawned upon his restless couch, he thought himself worse than childless,—a bereaved and heart-broken man. Little did he foresee that ere night his prayers would be offered up in thankfulness to Heaven,—not only for his long lost son, but also for her whose very name he could not then hear without a feeling of anger,—nay, of loathing.

CHAPTER X.

“Most wretched man, who hopes in long disguise
To veil his evil deeds from mortal eyes !
Though all were silent else, the sounding air,
The conscious earth, his trespass shall declare :
Th’ Almighty oft in wisdom so provides,
The sin to punishment the sinner guides,
Who, whilst he strives t’elude each watchful sight,
Unheeding brings his lurking guilt to light.”

ARIOSTO.

THE repast ended, the now augmented party circled round the cheerful fire. Maria resumed her seat by Mr. Morland’s side; whilst opposite, in a large well-padded chair, sat the Captain, his eyes fixed on the fair girl with a look that told how joyous beat his heart at the sight.

“Poor Edwin!” said he; “we called to see him as we passed; he appears to bear his lot with great calmness. I hope he

will recover. But I see my ward is impatient to learn how we have succeeded at the old Hall, and I think it would be the best plan for Frank to relate the leading incidents of our late proceedings to-night, and leave the particulars wherewith to wile away the long winter evenings."

"You are right, Captain," said Mr. Morland; "so now, Frank, let us hear your story."

"I presume," he commenced, "from what I see and hear, that all are acquainted with the circumstances that had occurred up to the night on which Mr. Kenworthy and myself left for London. Our first inquiry upon arriving there was for my friend's ship the 'Malabar,' and we were informed that she was off Gravesend, but would be in dock before night. However, we could not wait till evening, but took the first steamer that we found going

down the river. Abdullah welcomed me with unfeigned joy; and even my little friends in the cage recognised their playmate with cries of delight. An hour or more elapsed before the tow-rope from the steam tug was affixed to the ship, and our anchor weighed; and then, as we glided rapidly along against wind and current, the Captain joined us, having been up to that time engaged in the duties of his ship. He was conversing on casual subjects, when I remarked that after so long an absence from England he might hear of many of his friends having been removed by death, whilst others would be lost to him almost as hopelessly, by the change time effects in the affairs and affections of men.—‘There are some I know,’ said he, ‘whose affections death only could extinguish; these I shall meet, for their bark is always at anchor, not tossed about by the storms and vicissi-

tudes of commerce; but a good stem of a right generous stock—a family that have lived on their own estate many hundreds of years, and are likely to transmit it to many generations yet to come.’ Here the Captain’s eye brightened up, as though he already grasped the hand of his friend.”

“My emotion,” said Captain Hardy, interrupting Frank’s narrative, “was only the just tribute with which memory repaid the happiness of years long gone by. Mr. St. Crost and his truly estimable lady were not the everyday acquaintances that a man meets and parts from with scarcely a remembrance being left on his mind. But such beings as they, live, as it were, in our minds as something above ourselves; for they cheer us when present, and though the globe may intervene between us, still they are ever with us, being, in fond fancy, our constant companions. Often after a hard day’s toil have I lain

on the ground, for years my only couch, and dreamt of happy England and the friends I had left there. These thoughts would bring them as vividly before my mind as if actually present; and though always silent, they seemed by their gestures to invite me to return. But I awoke only to find it all a vision."

" Might it not be something more than the delusion of sleep," whispered Maria, in a low sweet voice; " perhaps the blessed spirits were hovering around your bed of slavery."

" If they were permitted again to visit the haunts of man," said the Captain, " would they not, like the good Genii, or Perees, of Eastern story, have been guarding the treasures they valued most whilst on earth? For if any human passion is carried beyond the grave, will it not, Mr. Wynn, be a parent's love for a duteous child?"

"This," replied the reverend gentleman, after a moment's reflection, "is a subject on which man has, through all ages, delighted to dwell. Heathens, as well as Christians, have in vain attempted to lift the veil from the future. And when the Scriptures were given to us without any information being contained in them with regard to this subject, I look upon it as a silent admonition that we ought to live for eternity; and, without speculating upon what our state will be afterwards, to leave all beyond the grave to God, who has promised to give us that which it never entered into the heart of man to conceive. The thoughts are pleasing ones; and, when indulged in a right spirit, are, I should think, innocent."

There was a pause of some moments after the old man ceased speaking, before Frank resumed his narrative, which he did as follows:

“I took Captain Hardy’s hand in my own, and, in a tone of voice from which I wished him to gather more than the mere words themselves expressed, said, ‘But may not death, my dear sir, have removed these from you?’—‘Dead, dead!’ he exclaimed, and his whole frame shook with emotion. ‘Pshaw! what a fool I am,’ he continued, releasing my hand. ‘Why create imaginary evils? You, sir, never knew my friend.’—‘That I shall ever regret,’ rejoined I; ‘for what I have heard since I parted from you two days ago, has made their memory as dear to me as if years of friendship had bound our hearts in one. We have a story for you, Captain, that will interest you much. But, were it not too long, this is not the place to enter into it. We have a private room at the Bull and Mouth, in St. Martins-le-Grand, and shall dine at six. Until then, we

will not intrude upon your time.' And, being off Blackwall, we took a boat and went on shore. A little before the hour named, Captain Hardy's arrival at our hotel was announced. I deferred commencing my story until the business of dinner was concluded, which we made as short as possible, being all anxious for the quiet conversation that was to follow. I introduced the subject by mentioning the hunting scene, and his own hasty recall from the country; but I had only to allude to the occurrences of that morning, when even the minutest particulars relating to them recurred to his mind. It would only be an unnecessary renewal of griefs were I to repeat all that passed. After the first outburst of lamentation for the death of his friend, the Captain remained perfectly silent; and as I proceeded to detail, as closely as I was able, the perfidious and unmanly conduct of

Hawke towards the widow and her orphans, his countenance assumed an expression both of hatred and pity; pity for the oppressed, and abhorrence of the oppressor. A tear from the eye of a brave man, is of itself sufficient to speak the worth of a departed friend; and the Captain strove not to conceal those he shed upon hearing that the widow had long been placed by her husband's side in the silent tomb. 'Never did a more kind or gentle spirit leave this for a better world,' said he. But when I came to that part of the narrative where Maria and Edwin were removed from the labourer's cottage, and sent to work in a cotton mill, his indignation broke forth in speech—'The villain!' he exclaimed, 'he deserves to swing from a yardarm! The sequel is as clear to me as if I had heard all. He had better have sent them to Brazil at once, and sold them for

slaves; for there they might at least have died innocent. I see all: I see a scene, first of misery and labour, a striving against temptation, then despair, closely followed by recklessness, and then— Oh, no, I cannot go further; I cannot think my virtuous little playmate would forget her mother's precepts but in death. Nor did she—your look convinces me she did not. No. Well, she died pure as she had——.' 'Maria still lives,' said I, interrupting his soliloquy; 'lives to sweeten your remaining years, by a renewal of that fond friendship she has cherished through a separation which, to many, would have been without hope of an earthly reunion. Whilst to me she is as precious as the life I would jeopardize in her defence.' When I had concluded my narrative, we consulted as to the best means to be adopted in order to outsoar this Hawke, that had ensconced himself so high in the

eagle's eyrie : or, as the Captain said, ' get the weathergauge of him.' "

" Your story is all very well as far as it goes," said the Captain; " but, like a modest young man, you omit the conversation that passed immediately before we arranged our plans. If it were possible that the joy I experienced upon learning that my ward had passed through the fire without being contaminated could be heightened, it was when I heard that my young friend Frank Morland had won the heart of a girl whose conduct proved that his love was not misplaced. He dwelt on the charms of his Maria's mind, but for nought else did he prepare me. There—now sir, you may proceed."

" Our future movements were ultimately guided by Mr. Kenworthy's advice," resumed Frank. " This was, to take the enemy by surprise; for he argued that nothing would prevail with

such men as the one we had to deal with, except a cowardly fear lest all their villany should be disclosed. But as this feeling would be only a temporary one, we must be prepared to take full advantage of it; for upon that which passed whilst he remained in dread of what the world would say, all our future success might depend. It was late on the following day before Captain Hardy could leave town; and darkness had almost hidden the cathedral of Ely from view, when we drove over the bridge outside that city on our way to visit Mr. Hawke, in whose hall we intended to be, unbidden, and we had no doubt, unwelcome guests. The clock of the village inn struck ten as we were ushered by mine host into one of its snug little rooms. He was an honest open-hearted looking fellow, nor did the countenance belie the man. The moment the Captain

took his hat off he recognised him, but had the good sense not to address him until we were alone."

"I remember him well," said Maria. "He had been one of my father's servants when a young man, and was out with the hunt on the day of the accident."

"So he informed us. And after many greetings had passed between the Captain and him, we learnt a few of the most important events that had occurred at the village during the last two years. Any one making inquiry about their young master or mistress, was told that Mr. Hawke was taking great care of them, having sent them to expensive schools in a distant part of the country. Very few believed this, and for a long time suspicion lurked in the minds of all; and thoughts were harboured in many a rustic's mind, which, had he given utterance to, the fate that befel Goodram would have

befallen him. For the great man had not allowed his revenge to sleep, but continued to harass the family by a never-ceasing persecution, which he had carried on to the present time, hoping to drive them from the neighbourhood; and when this did not succeed, it was hinted to the old man, that if he would go to America, his passage would be paid. But Goodram remembered the promise, that though the wicked might flourish like a green bay-tree, yet a time should come when their wickedness would be discovered; and, old as he was, he hoped to see that day. Thus the matter remained until about eight months ago, when the village gossip was awakened by the inmates of the Hall, the servants as well as the family appearing at church in deep mourning, Miss St. Crost having died suddenly of the ague, at a school in Lincolnshire. This once more aroused suspicion; but still, as

they had no proof of fraud, they contented themselves with surmises. But when it was announced, a few months afterwards, that Master Edwin also was dead, an universal outcry was raised by the tenantry and villagers; and as no one attempted to conceal his thoughts, the subject became the topic of general conversation. All that passed was duly repeated to Mr. Hawke, whose spies were ever ready to listen. Unfortunately the rent-day came round just at this time, and all who had said anything upon the subject—our host of the village inn among the number—were assembled in Mr. Hawke's study, when he informed them that he was in possession of the rumours that were in circulation; and after talking for some time, concluded his long harangue by giving about half of them notice to quit their farms, and our informant his hostel. He then read two

papers purporting to be certificates from the master and mistress of the schools at which his nephew and niece had been placed. He said he produced these, not to justify himself, for it would be beneath him to contradict every calumny that might be spoken against him, but merely to show his hearers what credulous fellows they were. One of those present asked for a copy of the papers, but this was refused; and they were dismissed very chop-fallen. Only one incident had occurred since that bore upon the subject, and that was a ghost story. A farmer was on his way into an adjoining county; and whilst driving his wain one evening about dusk, he met two youths, one of which he recognised as his young master. Fear overcame him, and for some moments he dared not look back; but when he did so, both the youths had vanished, though there was nothing to obstruct the

view; and only one cottage to be seen, and that at a considerable distance. His story was listened to by many a rustic circle with feelings of awe, nor durst the village maidens, after that, pass near the Hall alone after dark. Our host finished his narrative by telling us that the Hall was very full of company, a ball being given that night by Mr. and Mrs. Hawke, to celebrate the entrance into his teens of their eldest son and heir. We resolved to proceed there at once, though midnight was not far distant, Mr. Kenworthy remaining at the inn, in order that our party might not raise suspicion. As the carriage drove up the long avenue, the light that shone from every window of the mansion, gave indication of life; and upon emerging into the open ground, the sounds of music and merriment told that the house of mourning was transformed into one of mirth. We entered the Hall

as guests that had been bidden to the feast; and the door of the drawing-room, in which a numerous party were assembled, being thrown open, Captain Hardy and Mr. Frank Smith, the name I had assumed for the evening, were announced. The Captain was not recognised by any of the few persons who heard his name. 'There is the old shark,' said he to me, as we took a survey of the scene. 'He is so much taken up with that young lady's conversation that he does not observe our presence.' I at once recognised Mr. Hawke, by the description Maria had given us of him, even among so many strange faces. He is a gentlemanly man in appearance,—tall, and rather inclined to corpulence; and had a look of pride, that might almost be called arrogance. 'Come with me,' said my companion, 'and mark the change that will come across his features

when his eye meets mine.' Feeling a hand placed on his shoulder, he turned his head.—Truly we know not what a second (of time) may bring forth—a single glance of the eye, and the haughty man is cowed, like a guilty criminal before his judge; and the crimes of years stand arrayed before him, as distinct as the kings before the amazed Macbeth. Some called for water, supposing he was about to faint, whilst the rest scowled upon us as though we had been officers of justice come to arrest their host. However, he speedily recovered his presence of mind, stammered forth an apology to his guests, shook the Captain by the hand, and said it was the happiest moment of his life. Presently Mrs. Hawke entered, when a somewhat similar scene was re-enacted. But Captain Hardy placed her arm inside his own, and motioning me to follow, left the room. 'Where can we have a little peace?'

said he, addressing his gentle but unwilling companion. 'I want to have a little quiet chat about my wards. Oh, I see, there is no one in Mr. St. Crost's study; I beg your pardon, madam,—Mr. Hawke's now, I presume?' Accordingly he led the way, and placed her in a chair. From the lady we had a repetition of the story we had previously heard. The fair dame shed many tears at the remembrance of the untimely fate of the two cherubs; they were so dear to her husband and herself. 'Many of your guests will doubtless remain with you until morning,' remarked the Captain, in a careless tone; 'so I think, Frank, we had better make up our minds to——.' He dwelt upon the last word in order to give Mrs. Hawke an opportunity to construe the sentence in her own way. She took the bait. 'Oh, yes,' said she, with great eagerness; 'we have already so many ladies to ac-

commodate, that some of the gentlemen will be obliged to sleep in the parlours. But you shall have the carriage to take you to the inn whenever you wish.'— 'We will not leave you for the world, my dear madam,' rejoined he. 'We sailors are too much used to being knocked about to think a bed worth the looking after. We will sleep in this room where we are; and if——' But our hostess had become very much troubled, and, interrupting him, said they would give up to us their own bed. The Captain vowed he would sleep nowhere but in that very room; 'and, if you have no spare blankets, the carpets will do for us. Here, John,' said he, hailing a footman, 'bring us another chair or two. There, that will do. Now, Frank, the sooner we turn in the better. And so, madam, as we have had a hard day's work, we will wish you a very good night.' The lady attempted to speak,

of the change about to take place at the Hall,—for the rookery continued in a state of the utmost excitement during the whole day. As this was a state of things that appeared to be in a fair way for lasting till midday, I resolved to explore some of the lower apartments of the mansion. The first object that met my eye upon sallying forth from our dormitory, was the body of a man lying on the stairs, his feet uppermost; his position appeared to be so uncomfortable, and even dangerous, that I stopped, and contrived to turn him round without awakening him. I passed on to the large entrance hall, and there felt as though I were in a place of sanctity. No change had apparently been made in it since my Maria and her widowed mother were ejected from the hall of their ancestors. Her eyes had rested with delight on the birds and animals carved there, and which her infant imagination

must, doubtless, have often imbued with life and motion, whilst the prattle of her childish voice had caused the lofty roof to re-echo many a joyous carol. The dining-room door was open, and inside a most disgraceful scene presented itself. There might be five or six individuals in the apartment; two of the number were asleep in their chairs, the others lay stretched at full length on the floor. One of those who were seated was a reverend—gentleman I cannot call him—brute would be the most appropriate name: I took him to be Mr. Gay, and found afterwards, upon inquiring, that my supposition was correct. A capacious punch-bowl, almost emptied of its contents, bore witness as to the power that had prostrated the revellers. I felt my human nature degraded by what I saw, and was glad to find myself alone on the lawn. Standing beneath the very trees

in whose shade Maria had viewed the gathering of the hunt on the fatal morning, I pictured the whole scene to my mind, and must have spent a long time in my reverie, for, on returning to the study, I found the Captain at breakfast. Noon came, but still we saw neither host nor hostess. At first we imagined the rout of the previous night would account for this; but, when the guests had departed one after another, and we were left alone, we grew tired, and a footman was sent to his master's room with Captain Hardy's compliments, and he wished to know how soon he would be visible? The answer to our message was, that Mr. Hawke was unwell. 'Unwell!' shouted my companion, in a tone that struck terror into the fellow. 'Did you see your master, sirrah?' The reply was, that he did not see him. 'The villain is gone,' said the Captain; 'd—n me if he is not. Show me

your master's room.' And so it proved. He had left his guests under plea of illness; but, instead of retiring to rest, had taken horse and ridden off unattended. We dispatched a courier to the nearest telegraph station, in order to transmit a description of the fugitive to the London and Liverpool police, and to obtain any information he could as to his movements. It was past midnight when our messenger returned, with the news that a person, answering the description of Mr. Hawke, had arrived in Liverpool by the train which left Manchester at ten o'clock; was without luggage, but said he had sent it on board the American steamer the day before; sailed under the name of Captain Hardy; the steamer left the Mersey at twelve o'clock at noon that day, Saturday, and might possibly be overtaken by one of the fast boats from Holyhead. This suggestion we had agreed to

adopt, but were prevented doing so by the advice of Mr. Kenworthy, who had been employed all day in collecting and arranging for examination the documents and papers. He thought, that as we were now in possession of everything necessary for our purpose, it would be a great saving of expense, as well as of unpleasantness to Captain Hardy and his wards, to allow the fugitive to escape. And so we let him go; and, by this time, he is halfway across the Atlantic Ocean."

"I am so glad he is gone," said Maria.

"And so were the villagers; for no sooner was the news of his flight spread among them, than old and young flocked to the Hall to express their gratitude to the Captain for their deliverance. He assembled them together, and related the leading features of Mr. Hawke's villainies; but when he told them that the orphans of their departed friends, whose memory

many of them still loved to dwell upon, were not only alive but would soon be amongst them, the joy of the poor creatures knew no bounds; some cried through the excess of it, whilst others gave utterance to theirs in loud huzzas. As for myself, I was almost torn in pieces by them in their anxiety to greet the betrothed of their young mistress. We then regaled them with the remnants of the previous day's feast, and sent them away rejoicing. With poor old Goodram I had a long and sweet discourse, for my own Maria was its chief theme. The old man, feeble through toil and grief, thanked heaven that his gray hairs were not to go down in sorrow to the grave. I made his heart glad when I pictured the many happy years of earthly joy that, God willing it, were still in store for him, before he received his final reward. His youngest son, now about two-and-twenty years of

age, was very useful to Mr. Kenworthy. We were all so much pleased with him, that we installed him into the vacant stewardship. Upon examining the documents we found them to be of the utmost importance. First in weight were two wills of the late Mr. St. Crost. One was that read on the morning of the funeral; the other bore a later date, and cancelled all previous ones. The latter will contained a legacy to Captain Hardy of ten thousand pounds, whilst the one to Mr. Hawke was merely one thousand, being a reward for the attention he had paid to the testator's affairs; besides these were small sums, bequests to many, chiefly old servants, whose names were mentioned; his wife Edith was also named as an executrix. This will had been kept back by Mr. Hawke, as the widow's possession of a power equal to his own would have disconcerted his

plans. The other will bore evident marks of being a spurious one. Next came the fictitious mortgage deeds; the signature for these had been pricked from the genuine will with such neatness that it required the nicest examination to detect the fraud. The sum they were intended to represent amounted to that Maria mentioned. In a portfolio we discovered securities for a considerable amount of property in the United States; this course we imagined had been adopted in order to meet an emergency such as this, which has so unexpectedly happened. On Tuesday a packet addressed to Mr. Hawke, and bearing the New York postmark, came to hand; in it were other securities for a large purchase of American bonds, recently transacted. These explained the cause and direction of his sudden flight, for he must have expected to arrive in New York in time to receive

them personally, little thinking that the steamer he would meet, when only a few hours' sail from Liverpool, was restoring the proceeds of his villany to the rightful owners; he will, however, very shortly find himself in a foreign land penniless and apprehensive of pursuit—a meet punishment for his crimes. The Captain went to London for a few days, and only returned yesterday, but being impatient to see his wards, we set out this morning; never imagining that a fairy being had taken up our pleasing task; and whilst we rolled swiftly along, charged, as we thought, with the most powerful of spells, wherewith to work my father's mind, she, aided and adorned by her own simple loveliness alone, had effected all."

"I am glad, Frank, that it was so," said Mr. Morland. "I saw, though late, in this my child an incomparable treasure; my heart was with her before I knew her story."

“ You forget that note, Frank, my boy,” said Captain Hardy, “ that we discovered among the fellow’s papers relating to the loss of my ship. It was from the editor of a provincial newspaper, and addressed to Mr. Hawke, thanking him for his communication on the subject. I rode over to see the man, and got a true version of the affair inserted in his paper.”

CHAPTER XI.

"Fortune made a vow to torment me incessantly; but thine oath hath proved false, O Fortune! therefore expiate it.

"Happiness hath arrived, and the beloved is come to my relief; repair, then, to the messenger of festivity, and hasten."

ARABIC COUPLET.

THE twentieth of April of the year 1849, was a day that will not only live in the memories of the then inhabitants of the village, near which Mr. Morland's mills were situated, and of the hill sides around, but will be handed down in story through many succeeding generations; for it was on that day young Frank Morland was united to Maria St. Crost. The festivities and amusements were such as a prince would not be ashamed to provide for his nuptial day.

At sunrise the village bells sent forth the welcome tidings, that the day of rejoicing had already dawned. And as the joyful sound was wafted from valley to hill, it was received as a glad messenger who brings good news. Sleep was immediately banished from every eyelid; and soon the woods and lanes verging towards the Hall, were dotted with well-dressed people of both sexes and all ages: each one anxious not to be too late—all much too early: so that by eight o'clock many hundreds had assembled in the park.

The sky up to this time had worn a threatening appearance: a few drops of rain fell, foreboding a gloomy day; and some of the more timid, in order to be prepared for the worst, brought cloaks and umbrellas. But the bridal morn was only a miniature copy of the life of her whose happiness they had come to witness. The sun by degrees burst forth,

driving the black clouds up the hill sides, until they floated in mist round their heath-clad summits, and behind which, to darken by their presence some less joyous scene, they finally disappeared. After rambling through the grounds many of the females, and a few of the young men, proceeded to the church to be present at the ceremony.

Maria was still sojourning at the Parsonage; and on that morning her sweet and placid sleep little betokened the eventful day that had broken upon her. She slept on—and smiled as a pleasing vision passed before her mind: nor were her slumbers dispelled except by the voice of her kind hostess. Her first duty accomplished, that of offering up her thanks to the Father of all for this his greatest blessing, and praying for assistance to enable her to pass through the day without allowing feelings of pride to mark any

of her actions or find a lodgment in her mind, she proceeded to her toilet.

In her costume for the morning she had submitted entirely to Frank's wish, which, though it might be thought a peculiar one, was not dictated through a desire for singularity; but having chosen her as the object of his love whilst in a humble sphere of life, so now that she was far removed from a position which she had filled with so much credit to herself, he wished to show that it was not the lady of fortune and family that was to be his bride, but the lowly and gentle Maria.

Her dress of muslin, virgin white, was fashioned similar to those in which Frank had so often seen her at work in the mill, or at the Lodge, when seated with her Bible, reading to her aged companions, as was her wont each evening, a portion of Scripture; it was enchanting from its very simplicity. Her raven tresses, soft

as glossiest silk, were bound by a wreath of lilies of the valley, gathered from among the weeds of a shady bank, intertwined with the young and downy leaves of the olive, a plant sacred to peace and to her who is said to have invented the arts of spinning and weaving. These were Nature's offerings; true emblems here of a purity and innocence which the orange blossom is but too often presumed to represent; the virtues to be portrayed being in many cases as artificial as their type. The only ornament that she wore was a string of pearls around her neck; and these were added merely to relieve her dress by marking where it terminated.

Thus her native beauty was left unadorned to cope with that of her superbly attired bridesmaids; and they were some of the loveliest of their sex, for amongst them was Ann Marsh. But if art had added grace to their charms, then was

Maria's victory only the more complete. Her beauty enchanted but awed not; for she never appeared conscious that she was endowed with greater loveliness than others.

When Maria descended from her chamber she went, according to her usual custom, to Mr. Wynn's study, hoping this morning to find him alone—as indeed he was, having deferred until then a few remarks he wished to make relative to her future guidance. The good old man looked very sorrowful when he embraced her almost for the last time as his child, for he loved to call her such.

"Would it had been the will of Heaven," said he, "that we might not so soon have parted. But these things are ordained to remind us, that all joy here is transitory; and that, by meditating upon this, we may so live as to obtain that inestimable happiness which will never pass away."

"But, oh, my father, why should we be separated?" exclaimed Maria. "For, now that Mr. Gay is deprived, I know not how the vacancy could be so well filled as by being bestowed on my dearest friend. It is the only tribute of gratitude that is worthy the acceptance of so noble a heart."

The old man remained silent a few moments. He was praying for inward strength to enable him to resist the temptations of the world. It was granted him.

"Not so, Maria," were his words; "my affection for you has hitherto been that of a father. Then why should a parent's love be now bartered for gold?"

"My love you will ever retain; and—"

"Thou appearest, my child, like an angel of light," he exclaimed; "be not then the tempter that would entice me from fulfilling the duty to which Pro-

vidence has called me. The only pleasure life still has in store for me, is the cure of these poor sheep. Why should I, then, desert them and my God, to pander to earthly desires, that, at most, could only last a few short years? Not even the wishes of my best loved friends are worth a moment's regard if they interfere with my duty."

It was the first time Maria had given him cause to chide her; his words, his every look, therefore, entered only the more deeply into her heart; and, covered with confusion, she threw herself at his knees.

"Oh, my father," said she, "it was a wicked, a selfish thought, for me to presume to imagine that I was dearer to you than the thousands that God has committed to your care. I am not worthy of your regard,—my heart tells me so."

"Nay, my child," replied the old man,

as he kissed her forehead, "speak not thus; I meant not what I said. It was a generous offer, and the more precious to me because it proceeded from a motive as noble as it was pure. I will not, however, accept the proffered gift for myself; but if Edwin is spared, it shall, God willing, one day be his. For, as you are aware, he has declined the offer Mr. Morland made him, that of taking Frank's place in the business, preferring rather to enter the church, for which step his mind seems fully made up. I think he will not only be an ornament to his profession, but that he will enter the service of God with other and purer motives than those by which too many of the clergy of the Church of England are at the present day actuated. I shall teach him to look upon it as something more than a 'pass' by which he may obtain an admittance into society, or a stepping-stone to mere worldly distinction."

The reverend gentleman's discourse was interrupted by the entrance of Frank. He, too, was come to hear the good man's words,—precious words, that would now be doubly enhanced for being heard by, and shared with, his Maria. He knelt at her side and besought for them both the old man's blessing and advice.

"My blessing," said he, "I give you from my heart; but it rests with yourselves, my children, whether the prayer shall return into mine own bosom or be accepted on high, which God grant it may be. Oh, then, live as though your wealth were not given you for yourself alone, but that others might, through you, be made happy, and so Heaven will bless you. Harbour not feelings of resentment towards the family of that ambitious and ill-fated man, but deal with his widow and orphans,—for the term cannot be misapplied to those poor beings who are almost as hopelessly deprived of

the support of a husband and a father as if death itself had removed him,—as you would to your nearest and dearest friends; remember always, that you also have been in affliction. And, above all, never cease to praise God for that chastisement which it has pleased Him to use as His instrument for bringing you both nearer to Him; and oh, may that nearness be changed only for a——”

Here the words of the old man's prayer became inaudible, and the concluding portion of it was heard by Him alone to whom it was offered up.

After embracing them both, he led Maria into the adjoining room, in which the company were by that time assembled. Few of those present had ever seen Maria; it is therefore only natural to suppose, that an intense curiosity, which had been excited by rumour, should be the dominant passion in every mind. Seldom are great expectations so signally realized.

It was at Mr. Morland's suggestion that Ann Marsh was that day to be one of Maria's bridesmaids. His friendship appeared to strengthen with the misfortunes of the family. For Mr. Marsh he had obtained an appointment in a mercantile house in New York, to which city he was about to remove with his wife and daughter; whilst, a few months before, he had given young Marsh a situation in his own business, hoping to reform him; but his bad habits, and a passion for low company, were too deeply seated in him to be easily eradicated; he betrayed the confidence reposed in him, and, having lost the favour of his patron, was, at the time we speak of, on the stage of the very singing room at which he had once been the honoured and favoured guest.

The meeting between Maria and Ann brought feelings of a widely opposite nature into the bosoms of the two lovely

girls. Maria had heard the history of her less fortunate rival with sympathy, which her own misfortunes caused her more easily and acutely to feel: the magnitude of her calamities was sufficient to atone for, if not altogether to obliterate, whatever of pride or haughtiness Ann might still retain; she had, therefore, long wished to embrace her as a sister. On the other hand, Ann, in her heart, yet despised the factory girl, as she was pleased, in ridicule, to designate Maria; considering that to have passed through the lowest depths of poverty, and drank it to its very dregs, was a lasting disgrace,—a stain which even time itself could never efface. She forgot, or could not appreciate, the virtuous humility with which all this had been borne; and even Maria's former position in society, and her present restoration to that position, could not expiate the cottage and the mill.

Poor, weak, self-flatterer; might she but have been permitted to see, as others viewed, the relative bearing of each during their misfortunes, how different the picture that would have presented itself to her mind. They saw the one receiving the will of providence, not only without a murmur, but even with cheerfulness—happy so long as she knew her lover to be true; calm and resigned when she thought herself deserted by him. Had she herself given evidence, by her conduct under a comparatively small affliction, of a heart so true? She had not lost her parents, or been driven from home, and compelled to obtain her daily bread by daily toil. No. But she repined that she could not now, as once she could, spend the little that remained of day, after the morning's toilet, in the carriage or on horseback, or waste the hours of night in the frivolous pastime of a fashionable drawing-room.

These fashionable-life enjoyments — for how many of them is “enjoyment” a term inaptly used?—were now no longer available; consequently she lost the acquaintance of those in whose sphere she had once moved as an equal. And trifling as these bereavements in themselves really were, still she had long been taught to regard them as constituting all that was worth living for. A wild steed when first captured on the pampas of New Cordova never exhibited a more restive spirit, or a haughtier disdain for the yoke, than that assumed by Ann Marsh, when Mr. Morland hinted at the possibility of the young ladies being able to establish a school. “We have been educated as ladies,” was her remark, “and papa must keep us so.” Her idea was that labour, whether mental or bodily, did not come within the province of an accomplished female; happily for her Mr. Marsh had yet one friend

remaining. Imbued with such feelings as these she came that morning to the Parsonage, not so much to please others as to amuse herself; perhaps the conduct of this factory girl, and certainly her language, would afford subject for satire. But all thoughts of satire vanished the moment Maria stood before her. She could have wept through the excess of her vexation: her embarrassment was marked upon her countenance, being too strong to be concealed even by one so well versed in the art of disguising the best, as well as the worst emotions of the human mind; an art called by the world "politeness," and esteemed by it as though it were one of the cardinal virtues.

Maria, attributing this confusion to other motives than the one from which it sprang, took her by the hand, and embracing her, said, "May our friendship last through life, and be as sincere at its

conclusion as it is now." Poor Ann! she had entered the room predetermined to hate Maria; she now found herself utterly unable to adhere to this resolution; all her prejudices, aided by a proud spirit, could not resist such an appeal from such lips. The nobler affections of her mind, affections that had long been dormant, once more burst forth, and for the first time since childhood she became conscious of the pleasures that can flow from true friendship.

In the meantime the park presented an animating scene; the concourse of well-dressed people had increased to a numerous throng, many of them standing in groups along the margin of the carriage drive, gossiping over the events that had brought them there, whilst others talked in merry strains of the festivities in which they were about to join. Every person employed by Mr. Morland, upwards of a

thousand in number, had been presented with a day's wages; whilst among the poorest of them the gratuity was extended to articles of clothing. In a temporary building erected in the park, a plentiful repast was provided; and here, after the sports of the day were concluded, a dance was to close the rejoicings; consequently each face beamed with smiles, and all appeared perfectly happy, but none more truly so than Jack Houghton and his family; he wore a suit of black cloth, and was accompanied by his daughter Alice and her husband, who held a little urchin just able to waddle along, by the hand; Dinah was there too, holding Tom Wright by the arm; a close observer might at once have pronounced them husband and wife. The younger children, their curiosity flagging as time passed, were chasing each other over the grass. Such a picture of enjoyment as this scene pre-

sented might, of itself, be evidence sufficient to confute the theory so often broached and so generally believed, that the state of the labourer is and always must be a state of wretchedness; as though an all-wise Providence would, during thousands of years, have called into existence hundreds of millions of human beings, whose only birth right was misery, and whose only release was death, whilst a rich and powerful few alone were to taste of happiness. But it is not so; the ways of God are equal. The poor man's moments of enjoyments may not come so frequently as those of his wealthy neighbours, but what they lose in that respect is amply compensated for by the intensity of the happiness such moments bring; his joy is not clouded by an over-anxiety for to-morrow; he holds no lofty station, no high office, of which his most intimate friend may be plotting to deprive

him; he possesses no frail title to the temporary ownership of this world's riches, the very superfluity of which palls every pleasure.

And when we thus compare the classes of men in a spirit of fairness and truth, we find the life of a steady, industrious labouring man, is blessed with a greater amount of happiness,—“ of sober, simple, genuine joy,”—than that attained by the millionaire,—a man who knows the increase of his wealth only by the greater degree of anxiety it brings him. And if Houghton and his family might be looked upon as affording a fair pattern of the enjoyment experienced by the many hundreds that thronged Mr. Morland's park that morning, then might we confidently say, that no equal number of any class of her Majesty's subjects could, in that respect, have gained by a comparison with them. But perhaps the peculiar

position of this family, and the great obligations they were under to Frank and his lovely bride, might have given an additional impulse to the manifestations of their feelings. At Maria's request, Jack's former misconduct was forgiven; but, being unable any longer to spin, in consequence of partial blindness, a failing which every spinner above fifty years of age looks forward to as inevitable, the eye being affected by the nature of the employment, work of another kind was provided for him; the husband of his elder daughter had been advanced to the situation of overlooker; whilst Edwin's companion, Tom Wright, now held the place formerly occupied by the younger Hargreaves, who had been admitted into the business by his master as a partner, Mr. Morland being desirous to wean himself gradually from trade, and devote more of his time to the society of his children.

Any one at all acquainted with the factory operatives of the village, as they then were, and as they had been previous to the passing of the Ten Hours Bill, whether he was or was not a close observer of human nature, could not avoid remarking the change that was perceptible on the countenance of those now assembled; or, what was still more marked than this, the greater flow of animal spirits,—for life had now something more than the mere name. They had resumed their position in the community; a position gradually lost by themselves or their ancestors during the previous half century. It was certainly a disgrace to the boasted humanity of Englishmen, that the law should be compelled to interfere, and say they were not to be looked upon as pieces of mechanism only,—as machines of less value than the iron ones they tended, because, unlike those, they could be cast

on one side when worn out, and replaced without cost; but they now became aware that they were men and women, boys and girls; contented ones, ay, and happy ones too, for "contentment is riches rich enough."

Mr. Morland's workpeople were, perhaps, more highly favoured than their fellows: for, since the passing of the Ten Hours Bill, they had never worked a longer time than that Bill was intended to sanction, if interpreted in its true spirit; nor had their pecuniary resources been too much straitened by any diminution of the hours of labour below that.

Captain Hardy was to fulfil the pleasing duty of conferring the hand of his ward upon his young friend. His previous intimacy with Frank Morland, whose character as a man of honour, and a true gentleman, the tediousness of a long voyage had so fully elicited, caused

this pleasure to be the more perfect, for with the same act he consummated the happiness of the child of him whom, when living, he had esteemed beyond all men, and gave to a friend a prize for which that friend had temporarily braved a parent's anger.

Young Edwin leant on the arm of Mr. Morland; he was much taller and paler than before his accident, though fast recovering from the effects of it. In Mr. Morland's appearance there was only one thing that served as a clue to connect the present with the past: he who has wandered on the sea-shore after the subsiding of a tempest, must have observed the long white streak of foam that lies along the beach; and though all is then calm and serene, with no sound to break the stillness, except the sea-bird's call, or the music of gentle waves as they curl and run along the smooth sand, until

their whisper is lost in distance — still the line of spray is there — far beyond the flow of an ordinary tide, marking the bounds and fury of the recent storm;— so was it with him. There was nought in his then happy countenance that indicated the bitter anguish of which he had so deeply partaken; but his prematurely whitened locks told a tale of sorrows past, he hoped, for ever.

The ceremony itself was conducted without any ostentatious display; a decorous silence had, hitherto, been observed by those who had assembled to witness it; but when Maria stood by Captain Hardy's side, at the chancel rails, not even the reverence due to the sacred building in which they were, nor the knowledge that the eye of their pastor was upon them, were sufficient to prevent an audible ejaculation escaping the lips of many. "Ah, bless her pratty face!" was uttered

by many a female voice, whilst numbers wept, though they knew not why.

After a few hours spent at the Hall amongst their friends, the happy pair ordered their travelling chariot to meet them at the Lodge, where they proceeded in an open carriage. As they passed through the Park, many a familiar countenance was to be seen there, marked with an eager wish to obtain a parting salutation. And when this was received, Maria's smile of recognition had imprinted her image on their hearts, to remain, perhaps, through life. For how much more durable is the remembrance of amiable humility, rather than of haughty condescension—simply because it approaches nearer the perfection of human nature, and is therefore more lovable.

Old Hargreaves and his dame, justly proud of the distinction they had so nobly earned for themselves, were waiting to

bid "God speed" to her who had so long been to them as a daughter, and adorned by her presence their lowly cot, making it the scene of greater contentment than could have been found in many a marble hall.

Frank and his bride alighted at the Lodge, and, after saying "farewell" to its aged inmates, Maria was handed into the chariot by her brother, who had accompanied them thus far. Abdullah sprang up behind, and the youthful pair were borne away amid parting blessings, whose echo would scarce have ceased to vibrate, ere their ear would again receive the joyous strain, taken up by the exulting rustics when welcoming them to their rural home,—a home as dear now to Frank, as it once had been, and still was, to Maria.

THE END.

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